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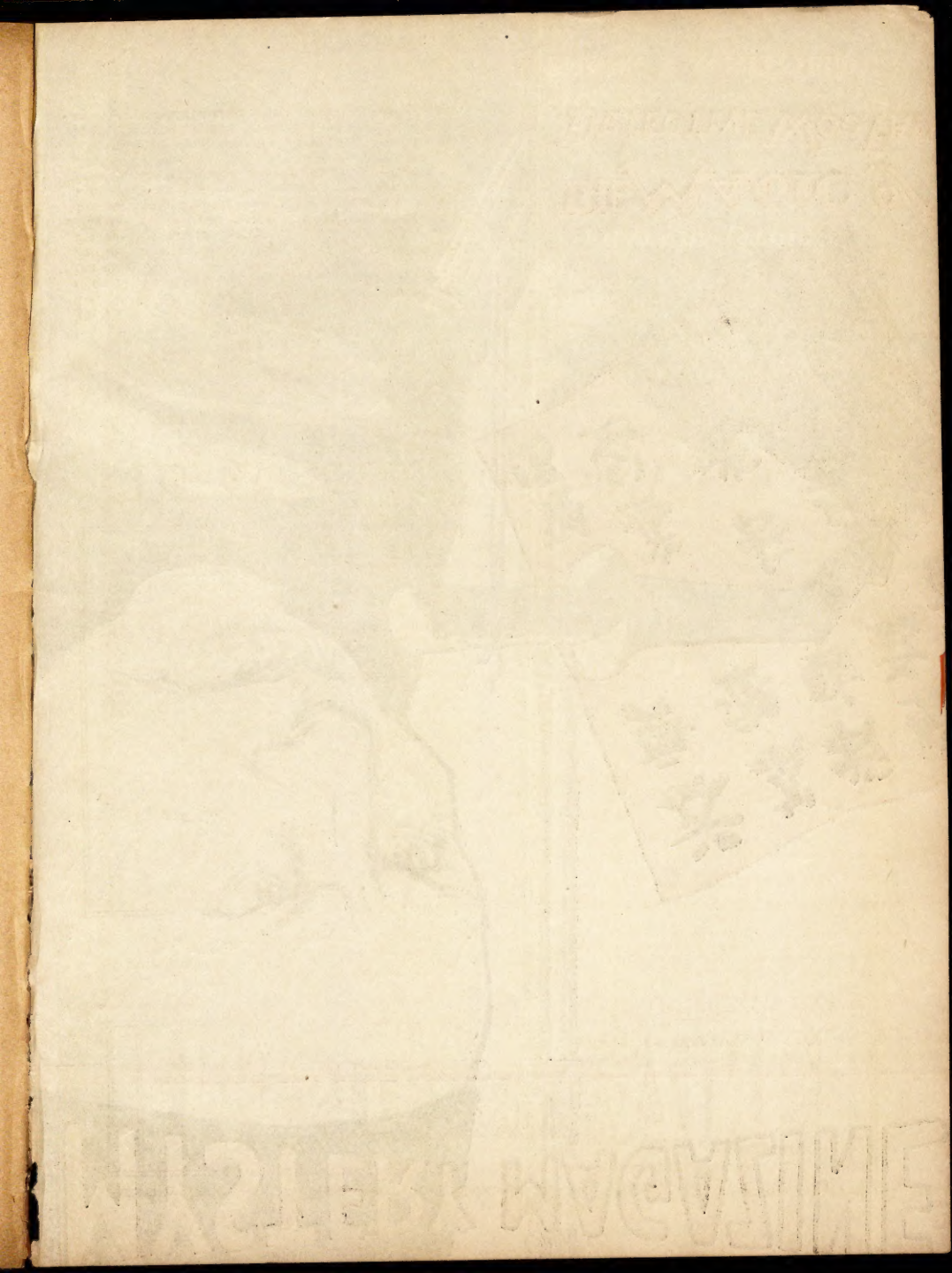
FEATURE STORY

THE MAGIC OF DETECTIVE WOO FAN

BY
FRANK F. WHITFIELD



Another Story by William Hamilton Osborne in Our Next Issue—"THE DECOY."

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The Magic of Detective Woo Fang

A STRANGE STORY OF A SIXTH SENSE

By FRANK F. WHITFIELD

CHAPTER ONE

DING-DONG! Ding-dong!

Down the narrow corridor a door slowly widened as if on hinges of air. A strange glow shone obliquely on the dingy floor of the entry, and, with the scarcely perceptible chimes, a bluish spiral of incense floated through the silently opened door.

In the hall the two strangers stood for an instant undecided, finally moving towards the pale glow. Suddenly a long, slender arm reached out from the darkness of the passage, and firm, lean fingers gripped the shoulder of the nearest man.

Recoiling by the unexpected seizure, John Brattle swung quickly around. Before he could utter a word of protest he found himself facing a tall, slightly stooping figure, whose head was inclined to one side as if in the perennial attitude of listening, and whose face was extremely pinched and long. His eyes were deep-socketed, jet black, and bright as the blackest of beads in the reflection of firelight. The deep, uncertain shadows of the passage exaggerated the man's cadaverous aspect, and his loose blouse and baggy trousers of pure gray silk lent to his emaciated figure proportions that did not exist.

The elder of the two amazed visitors stepped forward. "Pardon me," he said tremulously, "but we have come to see Woo Fang. The matter is urgent." The elderly florid-faced man smiled conciliatingly. "Evidently you don't let anybody approach you from behind?"

It was Woo Fang, a Chinese detective, who wavered in the uncertain light, peering into the millionaire's face for an instant, as if doubtful of the man's intentions.

"You like see him Woo Fang?" pronounced the strange host, parting his thin lips in a smile.

Mr. Fontaine nodded eagerly. "Yes! We have heard so much of his——"

"Ah-h!" Woo Fang stalked with short, choppy strides toward the door, which remained open. In the entry he stopped short, turning around with the precision of a mechanical figure. "Me is man you like see," he grunted uncivilly. "Huh! Come insi'." He started away, but to pause again. Soberly he watched the anxious men move timidly across the threshold, to eye with astonishment his effigy, which was placed just within the door. "Ah," he sang, "better pass man who look like Woo Fang by door." Quietly he snickered to himself. "Puzzle men no longer 'bout fake man who look like Woo Fang," he continued. "Him not man 'tall. Him dummy."

Woo Fang closed the door with the care one accords an antique; then, turning about, his lips vented in rapid succession, "Hip Sing Tong crowd have li'l habit to stand far 'way an' bag man with gun. Huh! Woo Fang have himself fake in door when it open, in case Hip Sing Tong come to shoot!"

Thoroughly Oriental was the interior of Woo Fang's rooms. No lavish decorations displeased the eye, yet the whole scheme impressed because of its rare display of native taste. Streaming from convolute censers on small taborets, which stood artistically on either side of an oblong ebony table with a cover of yellow silk, were varicolored incenses, paling now to a dull green, then to a brilliant red, again to a queer mixture, as of ever-changing colors in a summer's sunset. On the low black table, between the censers, stood an ivory idol, with a little weazened face, and hands that were folded serenely across the breast, as of one in death. Ranged about the floor were richly indented Oriental-figured rugs, and draped at the windows, through which scant light shone, were heavy saffron-colored hangings.

Woo Fang squatted on the floor, with his legs crossed before him. His stooping back was half turned on the idol. The drawn face of young Brattle lost some of its resignation. Now, perhaps, there was hope, a chance to secure aid from this strange Celestial. In mid-ceiling a single mellow light glowed.

On Woo Fang's face rested a peculiar, ethereal pallor, suggesting a scholar's skin. Atop his head, curled around in the shape of a cone, was the queue, which loyalty to the defunct Manchu Dynasty had prompted him to keep. His wound-up braid of black hair had the sheen of crow's wings. Stretched in front of the always apprehensive detective, and yawning occasionally with a little whine, was a sinewy white Russian wolfhound, which continually eyed the visitors with suspicion.

For several moments the callers were completely awed by their unusual surroundings; and both, in silence, stared at the gaunt willowy man of whom they had heard so much. He, meanwhile, sheathed his dark, luminous eyes, leisurely stroking the hair of Tee Tee. Nothing broke the awkward silence save the sputtering of the incense and the sharp crackling of the dog's hair.

Opening his eyes dreamily, Woo Fang looked from Brattle to Fontaine. With his calm glance longest on the millionaire, he asked: "Why you come to see Woo Fang, eh?"

"I'll tell you," began Mr. Fontaine, with a nervous clearing of the throat. "My name is Roger Fontaine, dealer in high-grade imported Oriental rugs. This young man, Mr. John Brattle, is associated with me in business. He, in a measure, is as vitally concerned in what I have come to see you about as I. I might add he has been to China."

"To China?" hummed Woo Fang, reminiscently.

"While there, Brattle, who was representing me in important contracts, made a bona-fide deal with an old established Chinese firm whereby we were to manufacture a sort of Chinese rug in this country from a Chinese dye formula. Now, what I'm setting out to say is this: Brattle was given this formula in a peculiar manner. The head of the Chinese firm had this valuable formula translated into English, after which, in very fine writing, he directed the formula to be transcribed upon a small slip of paper. You know, of course, how many Chinese business gentlemen have their pet way of doing things, even as American business men. Well, this man of whom I speak took the slip of paper, containing the formula, and fitting it into an emerald through which a small hole had been made some time or other—perhaps for the purpose of stringing the jewel on a necklace—it was given into the safe-keeping of Brattle."

"Like napkin ring, heh?" said Woo Fang.

"Just that. Brattle then gave his solemn word the formula should not be seen by anybody, not even himself, until it had been placed in my hands. I must tell you, so you will at once know my standards, that I am as square as a die; and Brattle, for years schooled in my employ, is of the same sound caliber. Yet, last night, while a dance was being given in honor of young Brattle, who, as I have said, had just returned with this wonderful formula secreted in the emerald, the precious stone as well as the formula were stolen from his person; yes, that wonderfully sacred emerald of Yee Chow."

Glancing up quickly, Woo Fang placed a lean hand on his flat chest. "Em'rald of Yee Chow?" he repeated.

"That's right," reiterated Brattle.

"Hm!" droned Woo Fang, "me think em'rald of Yee Chow still in idol."

"Eh—what's that?" asked Mr. Fontaine.

"Yee Chow," explained Woo Fang, stretching his long arm and stroking slowly the hound's back, "was great man many years 'go. Many Chin'man yet worship Yee Chow's mem'ry. Em'rald you speak 'bout is stone that was in whatchacall shrine to him. Las' time Woo Fang in China him see em'rald; tha's why not b'lieve Brattle man ever have real stone. Maybe Chinese merchant give im'tation, an' say it real as joke?"

"You think I had an imitation?" inquired Brattle.

"Mm; that what Woo Fang think. Yee Chow shrine, many Chin'man b'lieve, is key to heaven. All Chinese like worship father, you know. Chin'man spen' lots money fix things up for religious; yes."

"Perhaps it wasn't the real stone after all," mused the young man. "Possibly I misunderstood our Chinese friend when he gave me the stone."

"Guess so." Woo Fang closed his eyes. "Lots fake Yee Chow em'ralds all over world. But real em'rald? Heh! Man who get real em'rald from Yee Chow shrine, his life not worth two cen'! Yee Chow followers chase him to end of world." The nodding man opened his eyes, staring straight at Brattle. "How you lose stone?"

"Lose it? Why, I had just finished dancing with Olga Fontaine——" Brattle colored a bit, lowering his brown eyes.

"My daughter and young Brattle are sort of—thick," explained Mr. Fontaine, resting a paternal hand on Brattle's shoulders. "I have no son; have brought this boy up as my own and educated him. Rather like one of the family. But, go on, Jack."

"I was about to carry a glass of punch to Olga," proceeded the young man. "She was waiting for me in the conservatory. A Chinese, whom I took for Hong Ting Long, a gentleman who has dealt with Mr. Fontaine for years, approached me and chatted casually for a moment

or so. Several moments before this I had felt the emerald with the valuable formula in my pocket. You see, I had just arrived, hadn't yet seen Mr. Fontaine, who had been out of town until after my arrival; so I'd not had time to turn the emerald and my valuable trust over to him." The young man frowned, continuing earnestly: "If it wasn't for our business integrity, Woo Fang, the mere fact of losing what we thought was the emerald of Yee Chow wouldn't have brought us here in haste; but it was losing the priceless formula—of having it fall into other hands—that made us feel the great need of your help. But to get down to facts. When I got into the conservatory, after talking with the supposed Hong Ting Long, I happened to feel again for the stone. It was gone from my pocket, along with the wonderful dye formula, in which we had been offered exclusive rights for the United States and Canada. Can't you see how vital this thing is to me—to us? I've got to get that formula somehow. It was a cut-and-dried, cleverly planned theft by some Chinese to steal either the stone for the emerald's value, the formula for its great possibilities, or perhaps both. You see, the formula unluckily is not registered in Washington; as it stands it's common property. Whoever holds it can lay claim to its discovery. Of course, we might cable the Chinese firm for a duplicate and by the time it reaches us by mail the party who stole the formula might already have registered the formula with the government, and where would we be? Suits are all well and good, but possession is nine points of the law. Yes, we could claim the formula was stolen, but we can't prove somebody else didn't discover the secrets embodied in what they have actually stolen. Just think! Something that will revolutionize the rug industry in this country, giving beautiful Oriental patterns and colorings, without the import cost, has been taken from us on the eve of what must have been certain success!"

"M-m!" droned Woo Fang, swaying gently to and fro, and running his fan-like hands up his flowing silk sleeves. "What else you know 'bout thees robb'ry?"

"We know this much: that the man I spoke to was not Hong Ting Long, who, I think I have explained, was an invited and welcome guest. After discovering I had lost the stone we went over all the cards that were issued for the dance, and then the truth was made plain as to how this bogus guest got into the house. He had a counterfeit invitation card, engraved with the name of Hong Ting Long entered. So you can readily see what he was about beforehand. You see, we found two cards with this same man's name inscribed on them."

"But you not know who strange Chin'man was, or whether he come for em'rald or form'la?"

"Ah, there's the snag—just what we are up against, Woo Fang. We don't know the thief from Adam; never saw him, and couldn't say, now that you have mentioned the importance of this sacred emerald, whether the Chinese was after the stone or the valuable formula."

Woo Fang lowered his eyes, swaying back and forth like a slender reed on the air. "Woo Fang know all 'bout thees highbinder man. Huh! him see many times in China. Woo Fang right-hand man of last emp'ror in China. Woo Fang," he related sadly, "stick to Manchu Dynasty till it go—poof!" And to demonstrate his picturesque expression, he fluttered his fan-like hands, with their long, immaculately shaped nails so noticeably white against the background of parched yellowish skin. "M-m! after Manchu Dynasty gone, Woo Fang have to leave China. No more chance stick 'round. Too many Highbinder men after him life. Come to 'merica." He glanced up, a quaint cast in his glittering almond eyes. "You hear of Woo Fang where?"

"I learned of you through our Chinese ambassador," said Mr. Fontaine. "He has informed me, in confidence, of course, about the excellent work you have on occasions done for our Secret Service. He cited a 'Frisco case; also an affair you cleared on a mysterious ship which sailed from New Orleans."

"Um! Not much!" grunted Woo Fang. He settled back, with his arms stuffed in his silk sleeves, abruptly unconcerned, and to the surprise of his callers broke forth into discordant humming:

"Ho-le-lum-lo-lee-hun."

Jack Brattle glanced wonderingly at Mr. Fontaine, who only frowned, as if to signify this was but one of Woo Fang's idiosyncrasies. Apparently the Chinese detective was evincing no interest in this tangled affair centering around the rug manufacturer and importer and his eager apprentice.

"I hope," said Brattle presently, "you will be interested enough in our misfortune to help us. City detectives, also private ones, have started out to accomplish wonders, but up to a few minutes ago, when we had the house on the phone, nobody had found a clue. Then we decided to call up the ambassador, who, some time ago, had casually mentioned you to Mr. Fontaine."

Woo Fang's eyes closed; his sharp chin sank on his flat chest. His head, with the queue spiraled on top, in respect for the fallen Manchu Dynasty, bobbed rhythmically, as if he were bowing solemnly to a revered ancestor. He seemed like one in a trance, yet he was not. This was his means of concentrating on the vague matter outlined.

"Woo Fang," he droned finally, "know Highbinder man well. Huh! him not 'fraid bad Chin'man." His eyelids snapped suddenly back, as fan slats open, and he stared straight at Brattle. "Me understan' how Mister Fontaine feel, an' Mister Brattle, too. Honor mean much to good Chin'man; yes. An' Woo Fang glad to see it mean much to good 'merican."

Brattle uttered a sigh of relief. "I was afraid," he said, "you might, by chance, belong to this Yee Chow sect; and in that event wouldn't be in sympathy with us."

Slowly Woo Fang shook his head. "No; Woo Fang not b'long to Yee Chow. Woo Fang b'long to no-theeng." He rolled his eyes in dreamy fashion. "Woo Fang not much understood by 'merican man, anyhow. Many man laugh maybe, way he do things." His voice became less and less distinct, till its cadence sounded sepulchral. "Many 'merican detectives come to see me, but Woo Fang not always get friends with him. Huh! me do things own way."

"We are willing to pay well for your services," suggested Mr. Fontaine.

"Huh! money?" grunted the swaying Celestial. "Woo Fang not care much 'bout money. Manchu fam'ly give him pension. All Woo Fang need is what doctor, lawyer, preacher get f'om people." He stopped speaking to appraise the two gaping men with his melancholy glance. "Woo Fang mus' have whatchacall faith!" he pronounced, groping carefully for his vocabulary.

Brattle laughed nervously. "If we hadn't faith, Woo Fang, we should not have come."

CHAPTER TWO

WOO FANG, accompanied by Brattle and Mr. Fontaine, emerged from the entry, a high and noticeably narrow hall, the door of which had no knocker or bell. There was no visible knob on the door leading into Woo Fang's quarters on the much besigned Pell street of

New York's Chinatown. In the semi-darkness of the passage, however, was a small rope, particularly concealed, which, when pulled, caused the musical chimes to sound.

For several moments the three men stood on the rickety wooden steps, the millionaire glancing up and down the street to get accurate bearings. Brattle and he had come in the magnate's high-powered motor and had left the car, with the chauffeur, several blocks away, at Chatham Square. On the corner a chubby, wabbly Chinese child stared inquisitively at the Americans in the Oriental setting. Plodding to and fro along the pinched lane of lanterns, joss houses and curio shops were slant-eyed Johns and Charlies, who scooted with hands stuffed up their sleeves, apparently unseeing, yet quite conscious of everything about them. From the windows of grotesquely decorated joss houses issued various odors, a peculiar mixture of Chinese foods. Here was wafted the smell of stale tea, there the odor of chop suey, chow mein, boiled rice; while still farther down the street there issued from low windows the steam from boiling shirts and glossing collars.

"We'll just about make the house by four o'clock," decided Mr. Fontaine, looking at his watch. "First we'll drop into a restaurant and have a bite. It is now twelve."

The Fontaine country seat was four hours' motor ride out on Long Island. Probably in the whole of America there was not a country so nearly similar to the moors of Scotland as the spot on which the Fontaines had built their summer home. There, long, bleak, rolling sand dunes stretched for miles; with the limitless ocean beating in not far from the ever-dipping cinder road. Vegetation was sparse; trees there were none. In the vicinity of the Fontaine estate were perhaps four other great summer homes, perched aloft on the high-banked sand dunes, which overlooked the dreary expanse of land and sea.

At a little after four o'clock that afternoon the Fontaine touring car throbbed along the narrow cinder road, with the thoughtful Woo Fang and his sensitive Tee Tee ensconed in the great back seat, between Brattle and the millionaire. The air was damp, heavy with a mist driven in by the sea, the surf of which boomed close at hand. Presently the huge car was turned into a private way, mounting slowly in second gear around a spiral roadbed.

Abruptly out of the mist the great house loomed, hugging the small valleys between giant sand dunes like a long green sea serpent; though in fine weather the estate was an artistic piece of architecture. The roof was of green tile, the house proper of stained green shingles, with drab green shutters at the windows. In the drive, by the door, the motor stopped, and Brattle led the way up the steps.

Slowly and with his keen black eyes neglecting no details of the visible surroundings, Woo Fang followed, with the sleek Tee Tee trailing behind him.

Graves, the portly butler, who at once gave the impression of a happy man of service, opened the door for his master and companions.

"Nothing new, I suppose?" greeted Mr. Fontaine.

"Nothing, sir. The detectives have all left, most of them saying they'd be back, but none of them seemed any too pleased by results, sir," replied Graves.

Woo Fang entered quietly, with the eminence of manner which immediately inspired respect. On his lean face rested a cold, fixed smile. "Woo Fang," he pronounced, "may be glad he come; maybe not glad." The gaunt, stooping figure held out his hat to Graves, who, at the millionaire's meaning nod, showed deference to the suave Chinese.

Brattle drew Mr. Fontaine aside. "I'd keep Mrs. Fontaine and Olga away from Woo Fang as much as possible," he suggested. "Don't think he's overfond of having women around when he's working. I understand he's as changeable as the weather. Born crank—when he takes it into his head."

"Yes, I know," replied Mr. Fontaine, nodding. He hastily slipped away and up the stairs.

Brattle rejoined Woo Fang, who by now had slipped out of his coat and hat, and was standing in that characteristic swaying position, with his head tilted a bit to one side, as if listening for something which was intended for nobody else's ears.

"Firs'," droned Woo Fang gruffly, "me like to see room where em'rald was take." He looked oddly at Brattle, and the young man, nodding, led the bizarre Oriental along the hall to the drawing-room, thence into the ballroom.

"This is the room where it happened," said Brattle, with a wide sweep of the hand.

Woo Fang squinted, slowly surveying the room. Then he sighed, slumping his long frame into a chair by the wall. He leisurely fixed his glance on Brattle.

"Nice large room," commented Woo Fang casually. "Nice big lights in middle; nice long floor with much shine; yes?" He half closed his eyes after these apparently inconsequential preliminaries, a peculiarity of his whenever he was verging on deep concentration.. "Woo Fang wish he know if Brattle really had real em'rald of Yee Chow. Not think him did. Was—was New York papers tell 'bout stealing of em'rald? Mo'ning papers?"

"Oh, yes; there was quite a story."

"M-m!" Woo Fang put a lean hand on Tee Tee's cool snout, rubbing it till the dog affectionately licked his hand. "An' do Brattle know if any papers in China print 'bout stone give to him before he leave China?"

"That I can't say."

"M-m!" Dreamily Woo Fang opened and closed, opened and closed his eyes. "Now," Woo Fang suddenly straightened, "you have tell me at Pell street 'bout rug dealer, Hong Ting Long, who come here to dance. You say there was two cards?"

"Yes, there were." At this point Mr. Fontaine entered the room and overheard Woo Fang's question.

"I have saved both cards," he interrupted. "Would you like to see them?"

Woo Fang nodded. "Hurry!" he directed impatiently.

The millionaire returned quickly, an enigmatic expression on his countenance. "Say, Jack," he spluttered, "we certainly were idiots last night in not marking these cards as we found them in the pile." He turned to Woo Fang. "You see, we traced, through Graves, who watched the guests come in and put the cards in the tray, about which card belonged to Hong Ting Long, yet we neglected, in our excitement, to properly seggregate them after we had identified the counterfeit from the genuine."

Woo Fang had been leaning complacently back in the chair, while Tee Tee rubbed his sharp head against his master's slender legs. Nodding, the Chinese detective said: "Woo Fang like to see cards."

The importer passed them into the cold hands. Turning the cards over and over in his fingers, Woo Fang finally glanced up at the millionaire, suggesting: "Maybe Woo Fang can tell him diff'rence." Whereupon he gave his full attention to the cards, putting one to his nostrils, sniffing of it suspiciously, then scenting the other.

Startling both Mr. Fontaine and Brattle, Woo Fang broke forth into his disconnected humming. "Ho-le-lum-le-lum-lo." If he had discovered anything his unruffled manner gave no sign of it. His mien was implacable.

"Brattle," he asked presently, "you tol' me you was having some kind of drink when thees em'rald was take f'om you?"

"Yes; I was getting two glasses of punch. One for Olga—Miss Fontaine; the other for myself. I was about to carry them to the conservatory——"

"Conservatory?" groped Woo Fang, blinking.

"Yes; on the other side of the hall," elaborated young Brattle, nodding towards the profusion of blooms. "See, where they have flowers."

"M-m," droned Woo Fang, "flowers! Where girls an' boys make watchacall—love?" he grinned.

"That's where the young bloods generally head to hold hands," laughed Mr. Fontaine.

"But I never got to the conservatory," continued Brattle. "The emerald was stolen before that."

"In here?" inquired Woo Fang, pointing with a forefinger at the floor.

"Yes."

"Where was table?"

"What table?"

Woo Fang frowned impatiently. "Where you was get punch?"

"Oh! Over there, near that French window and the tall green palm, wasn't it, Mr. Fontaine?"

"Yes; just opposite Woo Fang."

Woo Fang's head was tilted sidewise, in that perennial attitude of listening, with his eyelids calmly folded. Again he sniffed of the cards. As if to discourage an introspective thought he shook his head. Slatting back his eyelids he suddenly demanded: "Woo Fang like to be 'lone." His tone was irritable, if not caustic, and he nodded towards the door.

Without question Brattle and Mr. Fontaine departed, and Woo Fang ignored them as they left. Completely detached was he, sitting gloomily with Tee Tee at his feet, as one in death, except for the slow swaying of his stooping, slender body.

For several moments Woo Fang sat humming in his inimitable, disjointed fashion. Apparently he was puzzled about something, for his eyelids batted angrily as he continued to inspect the cards, which seemed identical. Finally, in disgust, he got to his feet, thrusting the possibly worthless misguiding clues in his pocket, stalking nervously about the high-ceilinged ball-room with its expensive inlaid floor and pretty French windows.

Listening, Woo Fang halted, his whole frame stooped, his gaunt features oddly reared. Slowly he moved to the door, through which Brattle and the millionaire had just passed. Looking out, he was reassured that nobody was eavesdropping. He went farther, through the drawing-room, from which point he peered into the hall. He saw nobody there, either. Returning to the ball-room, his mood of indecision was cast off. Wheeling around, Woo Fang approached cautiously the spot where the buffet had been situated during the dance.

There he stood, cogitating for fully a minute, when he sank slowly to his knees, at the same time drawing forth the two cards from his blouse pocket. Anxiously he put the cards to his nostrils, interchanging them in rapid succession. A cold glitter shone in his eyes, as he seemed to fathom something unusual about one of the cards. Gradually the pupils of his deep-socketed eyes dilated, and methodically he bent his forehead towards the bare floor. Down, down, lower, lower went his head, till the end of his long sensitive nose scraped the shiny hardwood surface.

A minute passed, two minutes, when Woo Fang commenced to creep forward on all fours. Tee Tee, crouching, followed his master. The light from the outside world cast an opalescent glow around the interior. Like a scarcely animated being, Woo Fang proceeded, his head still lowered, as if in homage of his revered dynasty, his eyes a-gleam with an unnatural fire. Slowly, slowly he crept on, seeming to define an unseen trail. Now his course zig-zagged, now it led straight. Until he had reached the wide doorway at the farther end of the ball-room he did not falter again. In this door heavy curtains hung; and it was beside one of these that Woo Fang stopped.

Rising, he appraised with scrupulous care the curtain, taking hold of its folds and weighing it in his hands. Next he painstakingly patted both sides of the vari-colored drapery, as a man will beat a rug. Several times he repeated this operation with his slender hands, patting higher and higher, till his hands had ascended to their limit.

"Huh!" grunted Woo Fang, standing back from the curtain and regarding it quizzically. He perceived it had storks woven into the pattern, appearing rather like expensive tapestry. For a moment he thus stood scrutinizing the hanging, only to drop once more upon his hands and knees. Now his course led along the bottom of the curtain, thence on into the hall.

Frowning, Woo Fang got up, clapping his hands smartly together as he rose. Young Brattle and Mr. Fontaine appeared from the library, both with books in their hands, books they had selected at random merely as a pretense to hide their suspense. When he saw them drawing nigh, Woo Fang retreated into the drawing-room, which looked on the ball-room. Between these two rooms the curtains with the stork designs hung. Impulsively Brattle asked:

"Have you found any sign of the other man?"

Woo Fang, stooping, and regarding the two eager men in stolid, almost sulky silence, raised a hand solemnly. "Woo Fang fin' no-theeng," pronounced the strange man.

"But you—you wished to be alone?" said Brattle.

"M-m!" chanted Woo Fang. "Woo Fang bes' work 'lone." He looked from one face to the other, blinking, as if to accustom himself to the light. His eyes were just beginning to shape normal.

"But the cards?" pressed Mr. Fontaine, anxiously. "You surely must have——"

"Heh?" blinked Woo Fang. "M-m!" he sang, pleasantly, "cards. M-m, cards! Firs' Woo Fang guess him cards ver' good, nex' me guess not so good." His eyelids batted angrily. "Ver' hard," he continued, half-submerged in his own thoughts, "to fin' thees man who take em'rald, 'cause mos' Chin'man smoke opium." He ceased abruptly, to add defensively, "Woo Fang mean mos' bad Chin'man."

Had Woo Fang discovered something tangible? Was he withholding it from these vitally concerned men, whose very business integrity might depend on the outcome? Neither Brattle nor the magnate wished to press Woo Fang to fine points—this man, whose aloof manner discouraged familiarity in a social way, and close, sympathetic indulgence in any other respect.

Somewhat discouraged, Jack Brattle looked at the implacable visage. If, after all, Woo Fang had made no headway, would he give up and depart as suddenly as he had decided to come? Cards, two plain invitation cards, were flimsy clues at best.

Distantly, in the library, the telephone jangled. Woo Fang raised his head, Brattle turned, while Mr. Fontaine started off towards the library, only to be met by Anson, a lackey, who had answered the telephone and was seeking the millionaire.

"Come into the library and sit down," invited Mr. Fontaine, hastening away. "My office calling, no doubt. No use standing here while I'm busy."

Woo Fang and Brattle followed the magnate into the library, taking chairs near a bay window which looked out on the restless ocean, now so melancholy and gray. Tee Tee flopped with a little sigh at his master's feet, while Woo Fang closed his eyes, put back his head, stuffing his slender hands up the flowing sleeves of black silk. The sky roundabout was colored dull gray, and the sand dunes, in their drab silences, were fitting settings for the monotonous drizzle which lifted now and again, then settled down, blotting out the moor and the coarse grass.

At the telephone Mr. Fontaine was saying: "Yes, Drake, what is it? You've found a window in the store-room open—with the iron bars filed away? Which store-room? Where Hong Ting Long's Chinese rug shipment is located? Yes, it is singular. You haven't had time to get out that shipment for Long, have you? I thought not. You see, he was in to see me this morning. Was at our dance last night, too, and left rather embarrassed. Today he was awfully anxious to get his rugs, but we've been, as I told him then, too confounded busy to get them over to his place. By the way, has Hong Ting Long been in, to your knowledge, to look over his shipment? He has? Rather odd, his visit, don't you think?"

Woo Fang, who had apparently been oblivious to his immediate surroundings, suddenly stood on his feet. Quickly he crossed to where the anxious millionaire sat. "Mister Fontaine gonna tell Drake man to leave window way it is," he commanded quietly.

Without question Mr. Fontaine transmitted the outlined districts to his warehouse manager, only to turn back to Woo Fang, non-plussed. "As I hoped," he said, "you have heard everything. What do you make of it? Why was Hong Ting Long so anxious, I wonder, to have his rug shipment got over to his place of business? He, as you know, was an invited guest at our party last night; in fact, was the man whose invitation was counterfeited. Now, is there a possibility that he is concerned in the robbery?"

"Hardly possible," considered Brattle, "that a man of his standing and intelligence would permit a thief to do the things this unknown Chinese seemed capable of." He eyed Woo Fang, who had been listening in silence. "What do you think about it?"

"Me? Heh!" Woo Fang's thin lips parted, disclosing a large set of uneven, though perfect, teeth, resembling worn ivory piano keys. "Woo Fang think no-theeng much now, 'cept better go hurry back to New York—all of us. Sooner th' bes'." His gaunt figure swayed slowly to and fro, his eyes closed as if under the seductive spell of poppies. "To-nigh'," he droned, "we go where window is open. To-nigh'." And beckoning for his companions to follow, the tireless man, perhaps on a direct clue or perchance merely through his own intuition, stalked into the hall, clapping smartly his hand for Graves.

CHAPTER THREE

BACK in New York Woo Fang insisted that he be left to himself until eleven p. m. During the swift trip down, the weather had cleared as they neared New York, until now it promised to be a cool moonlit night.

Woo Fang left the motor at Chatham Square at ten o'clock, saying he would be on that corner in exactly one hour. Turning away, he slipped up narrow Pell street, stalking up the creaking wooden steps leading into his home of concealed elegance—with its poverty-stricken entrance—and disappeared quickly in the dark corridor.

Inside his comfortable quarters, with the incense-blown hangings, mellow lights and occasional garish flares of color, Woo Fang clapped his hands, was relieved of his coat, then squatted near the little ivory idol, to watch the servant feed Tee Tee his favorite morsel of chicken liver and warm gravy. On a low tabouret rested a copy of the morning paper Woo Fang had not yet read.

In the quiet of the one hour's peace he demanded for himself each day, he shook out the paper and was surprised to learn that Duke Po-Tsia of the Manchu Dynasty had arrived in New York. On another page of the same paper an advertisement announced an auction sale of the duke's private collection at Hendrickson's art rooms. The famous Chinese art collection was comprised of antique porcelains, jades, pottery, bronzes, embroideries, statuary and other pieces of extraordinary importance, including the Manchu State Emerald.

Since the Manchus had been driven from power, Duke Po-Tsia had been financially in a bad way. Once a collector of rare treasures, he was now forced to dispose of his possessions. America, the land which welcomed and paid handsomely for all art, became his logical goal.

Po-Tsia was a tall, slender, loose-jointed man of about thirty-five years of age; yet he seemed older. His skin was like aged yellow parchment, and was drawn so closely across his prominent cheekbones that it seemed they must pierce through. He wore no queue, the mark of allegiance to the Manchu Dynasty. He had been forcibly shorn of his pig-tail by the revolutionary element, which had all but taken his life in the bargain. For some reason, known only to himself, this austere member of the Manchu family was living incognito in New York. Somehow the press had learned of his presence, yet the duke had refused an interview.

Woo Fang had never met this member of the former royal household. Whenever the famous detective had been serving his emperor the duke had been off traveling. Presently Woo Fang laid aside the paper, listening. With his head cocked sidewise he wavered to his feet, slipping silently through a concealed door, which led into a cramped, dark passage. From this passage he turned into the small alcove, from which spot he had lately surprised Brattle and Mr. Fontaine.

In the entry stood a tall, cadaverous figure. In back of this waiting man stood another, who presently reached up and tugged for the second time on the partially concealed bell-rope. Under pressure of a secret spring, the visible door looking into Woo Fang's rooms opened at the end of the dingy corridor; and, in full view, just within the door, stood the striking likeless of the Oriental master. As Woo Fang's door swung back on silent hinges, the man nearest the street turned abruptly away, vanishing into the night, while the cadaverous Chinese moved slowly forward.

As the visitor advanced, Woo Fang watched cattishly from his point of security—a niche in the wall—to see if the stranger's hands were free. Woo Fang was yet inclined to be wary, waiting till the man had passed his hiding place before stooping into step behind him.

But Woo Fang changed his mind. Instead of apprehending the stranger he returned to the secret alcove, hastening thence into the room of the flaming censers. Had the visitor been bent on destruction he should have followed before now the precedent of Highbinders. Without risking his own life, the man might have fired from the dark passage at Woo Fang's effigy, then turned to flight.

Back in the room Woo Fang clapped his hands. Appearing, the servant shut the door towards which the stranger was walking, at the same time drawing loose a cord which dropped a heavy curtain before the image

of Woo Fang. This operation consumed but the space of a moment, so thoroughly trained was the tense-faced servant.

Woo Fang snapped his fingers at Tee Tee, who stood formidably at attention beside his master, whereupon they both turned away to the luxurious rug which was ranged before the weazened ivory idol. Before the visitor had time to reach the door and knock, it was swung open again, yet now Woo Fang's likeness was obliterated. Blinking, the stranger crossed the threshold to find his host sprawled unconcernedly on the rug, with one hand resting fondly on Tee Tee's coat.

Leisurely Woo Fang raised his eyes, appraising the man who had come uninvited into his quarters. Before him stood an ungainly Chinese, slender and loose-jointed, with shorn hair and pasty-yellow skin, drawn so tightly across the high cheekbones that it seemed ready to break from the strain. The visitor was garbed in American clothes, and when he removed his black felt hat, Woo Fang perceived his hair was parted and sleeked down on either side.

"This is Woo Fang?" inquired the man, in Chinese.

For a moment Woo Fang hesitated, to reply evasively: "Woo Fang? Who may he be?"

The Chinese bowed, smiling conciliatingly. "Before I go further," he said, "let me ask if you recognize me?"

Woo Fang blinked. "No," he replied, "I don't recall."

The slender figure bowed low, saying at the same time, slowly: "I am Duke Po-Tsia."

Woo Fang's head bobbed back quickly; and he sat up on his knees, touching solemnly his forehead to the rug.

"Oh, most honorable——" began Woo Fang.

The visitor raised a wan hand, shaking pathetically his head. "No more, Woo Fang," he urged sadly, "no more. I am a broken man, financially and otherwise. I know you loved my people and still serve them in heart, for do you not still wear the plainly evident symbol of respect, the queue?"

Woo Fang swayed dreamily to and fro, with his fan-like hands stuffed up his flowing sleeves, and as he swayed he nodded, humming:

"Woo Fang remembers; Woo Fang loves the Manchus; Woo Fang——"

"But, alas! my branch of the family is penniless. You, I know, are still well provided for, and justly, since you guarded by your wonderful powers the lives of the emperor and his immediate family. The spirits of our honorable ancestors shall care for you. You were faithful, and even now if you were called upon——"

"Woo Fang would go to the ends of the earth for the Manchu Dynasty," sang the melancholy man. He stared moodily at a pair of straw mules which the duke wore, and which seemed to Woo Fang strangely out of place with the rest of his apparel. Leisurely he picked up the copy of the morning paper, turning to the advertisement which announced the auction. "Yes," he proceeded, "I have seen in this morning's paper that the most Honorable Duke Po-Tsia is to sell the treasures he has collected through a lifetime of youth and pleasure."

The caller nodded listlessly.

"That," he droned, "is why I came to you for consolation. You are the only friend of the Machus in this country. There are many who profess friendliness, but I must beware——"

"Of assassination!" hissed Woo Fang.

The other nodded wearily. "I shall sell all my treasures, as I need money desperately." He glanced apprehensively around the room, to proceed tensely. "Woo Fang," he asked, "what is this stone the New York papers have made so much of this morning? I refer to the stone stolen from a man named Brattle. They say he has been in China."

Woo Fang closed his eyes; Tee Tee backed away from the glowing censers and sneezed. "You, of course, know of the Shrine of Yee Chow?" he inquired.

The caller's eyes widened. "You can't mean——?" He paused, eyes agleam, and holding his breath.

"It was said to have been in the sacred idol," chanted Woo Fang unevenly. "This man Brattle, as I understand, had the stone presented to him by a Chinese gentleman in China. Where the Chinaman got it originally I know not." He opened his eyes, fixing his glance on the still man in the shadows. "Honorable Duke Po-Tsia, Woo Fang has pledged himself to reclaim that emerald, even if he has to move heaven and earth to get it!"

"But you certainly are not a member of that sect?"

"No; but Woo Fang's curiosity has been roused. He gloats over unusual things."

The quiet visitor, who had been smoking a cigarette, laid it in a brass tray. When he rose, Woo Fang rose with him. "I must go now, Woo Fang, but I shall call on you again. An agent of mine showed me the way here, and when I come again it may be alone." He backed slowly from the majestic figure's presence, only to hesitate after he had gone several paces. Retracing his steps to the brass tray, he removed the cigarette with gloved fingers. Satisfied that the stub was out, he placed it in his pocket. Offering no explanation, he turned towards the door, and squinting, said, colorlessly: "I hope Woo Fang will be successful in finding the emerald of Yee Chow."

Woo Fang bowed low. "Woo Fang thanks the most Honorable Duke Po-Tsia."

But the man was gone through the door.

Woo Fang clapped his hands. The servant appeared, shutting off the light and smothering the censers. The room was in Cimmerian darkness. A moment passed, two minutes, three. Then, in the deep shade of night, Woo Fang slipped as of a spirit on space to the outside door, where, as he half-expected, he found discarded a new pair of straw mules. In them had been a soft felt lining which, for some reason or another, had been stripped clean.

"M-m!" commented Woo Fang, swaying dreamily to and fro in the entry, "Duke Po-Tsia is a very odd man."

CHAPTER FOUR

At the appointed hour, eleven o'clock, Woo Fang met Mr. Fontaine and Brattle at Chatham Square.

"Ready?" inquired the methodical Oriental, bowing solemnly, and smiling sparingly at his two companions.

"All ready except the direction," replied Brattle.

Woo Fang frowned; his tendril-like eyebrows presented a strange effect when they tilted down and stretched like the wings of a black blutterfly. "Huh!" he grunted, "need no d'rection. All Woo Fang like to see is Fontaine business place where rug is kep'."

They went off together.

An hour later Woo Fang was waiting in the passage outside the storehouse. Abruptly there issued from the other side of the open window a succession of guttural lamentations. Quickened by the sounds, Woo Fang stepped clear of the shadows, listening attentively in the moon-struck passage. As suddenly as he had emerged from seclusion, Woo Fang re-entered the darkness without attempting, it seemed, to learn from whence the strange wails came.

Hong Ting Long's face appeared in the window. Woo

Fang discerned the man's features were slightly distorted. His oval eyes were terrorized by a suggested fear, and clumsily he clambered upon the sill in his feverish haste to flee. Failing of his purpose, he glanced apprehensively over his shoulders as if pursued. The look of horror sweeping over his yellow countenance gave certain evidence of hidden guilt.

Striding the window-sill, he swung out both feet, shod in American shoes, and heavily he dropped to the passage. Still muttering in his fright he struggled to his feet and ponderously began to zig-zag down the passage.

From the shadows a tall, reed-like figure sprang. Catching up with the fleeing Oriental and wheeling Hong Ting Long roughly about, Woo Fang tripped the clumsy Chinese. Looking fearfully into his captor's eyes, Hong Ting Long gasped:

"Woo Fang!"

"Huh!" grunted Woo Fang. "You not gonna hurry much, heh, Hong Ting Long?"

Brattle and Mr. Fontaine, unable longer to remain hidden, emerged from behind packing cases and plied Woo Fang with questions. Turning with a frown, the impatient man rested a long, lean finger on his stern lips, commanding:

"Quiet!" He then turned back to the cowering Chinese. "Why you come here, Hong Ting Long?" he demanded.

The Chinese rug-dealer shrugged his fat shoulders.

"Oh," he sang evasively, "me come jus' see rug." He smiled amicably.

"Rug, heh?" snapped Woo Fang, uttering an incredulous grunt. "Maybe you could not see 'nough rug in daytime, heh?"

"Oh, me forget 'bout some-theeng."

"Huh! tha's not gonna swallow by Woo Fang," declared the gaunt man. Slowly he began to lead Hong Ting Long towards the open window. "Maybe you leave thees window open, Hong Ting Long?"

"Me?"

"M-m!"

Hong Ting Long shook his head. "No," he said solemnly.

"Much like b'lieve; but you lie," spat Woo Fang, testily.

The little group were standing beneath the window around and through which Hong Ting Long had comported himself so mysteriously. While they stood there the Oriental who had been forcibly returned, quailed, squirming ineffectually to escape Woo Fang's iron grasp. Failing this, he broke forth into dispassionate pleading.

"Leggo me, Woo Fang. Me mus' go 'way f'om thees place." A hunted light shone in his eyes as he persisted in the efforts to release himself. "You gonna leggo?"

Woo Fang's thin lips twisted in a cold smile. "No!" he flared. "All us gonna go insi'," he pronounced firmly. Looking at Mr. Fontaine, who was still unreconciled to his former estimable customer's apparent guilt, he inquired: "Which way?"

"Better go through the cellar, same way Kelly entered," responded the magnate. He started ahead, the others following close behind.

Reaching the store-room, they saw a long, cumbersome rug, which was loosely rolled. The end which was turned towards the men—and resting on the bare floor clear of the many stacks of rugs—had the heavy burlap wrapping undone. Sprawled in front of this was the emaciated and inert body of a man. Hands, arms and legs figured on the rough boards grotesquely, the face pressed down. The man was clad in cheap gray attire, the invariable garb of a coolie.

For an instant nobody spoke, only following the line of Brattle's trembling finger. Then Woo Fang, with his prisoner backed against the wall, guarded by Tee Tee, moved swiftly to the prostrate form. Catching hold of the body by its wiry black hair, Woo Fang lifted the man's helpless form clear of the floor, turning his face to the light.

"Few minutes more—dead, maybe," he droned.

"You've heard no noise in here, Kelly?" asked Mr. Fontaine.

"Not a sound, sir. I was waiting in the other storeroom for you, sir. What is it," he inquired shakily, "murder?"

"Seems so," said Brattle, shaking his head and appearing glum. "Heaven knows what we're getting our necks into or what we're really up against."

Woo Fang, who had straightened again, raised a hand.

"No murder," he pronounced quietly.

His companions regarded him, astonished.

"Not murder?" breathed Mr. Fontaine.

Woo Fang shook his head firmly.

"Yet——" began Brattle.

"Man almos' die by self," proceeded Woo Fang, still secure in his own version of the situation. He looked to Kelly, the watchman, who had just entered. "Woo Fang want hot milk damn quick; yes? Gonna hurry, Kelly!"

"Yes; shake a leg," added Mr. Fontaine. "Run over to that all-night arm-chair lunch on Broadway. Get back as quickly as possible."

Kelly left the room hurriedly, and Woo Fang, to whom all eyes turned, indicated the prostrate yellow man by a sweep of his long lean hand. "See, man is not hurt!" he explained.

"But the uncanny noises in here?" suggested Brattle.

"M-m!" sang Woo Fang, training his deep-socketed eyes on Hong Ting Long. "Maybe Hong Ting Long gonna tell 'bout thees noise?"

The well-to-do Oriental averted his eyes. "Not gonna say one theeng," he grunted in surly fashion.

"Huh," rasped Woo Fang, "maybe p'lice gonna make Hong Ting Long talk?" He stood back, smiling in his inimitable way.

"P'lice, p'lice?" moaned Hong Ting Long, rolling his dark eyes fearfully. "Woo Fang not gonna tell p'lice?" he implored.

"Why not tell him p'lice?" rejoined Woo Fang, batting his eyelids angrily. "You come here, Hong Ting Long, go through open window, come out 'gain, an' me catch you. Huh! We come back in thees room where you been an' fin' Chin'man starve almos'!"

"Ah! But Woo Fang not think Hong Ting Long blame for it?" demanded the crafty Chinese merchant.

"You starve him—no?"

So far Woo Fang had given no sign of knowledge pertaining to the emaciated man's present plight. Now, however, as if to satisfy the paramount curiosity of his onlookers, he trailed across the floor to the rug from which the burlap had been removed at one end. He got on his hands and knees, peering with difficulty into the space afforded by the hole in the central part of the rolled rug. Evidently he was gratified immeasurably by what he saw, since he inserted one of his long slender arms, withdrawing it almost instantly. In his hand was a small package of questionable contents. Holding the bag before him, he shook it, and countless fluffy particles of white scattered over the floor.

Woo Fang nodded, and his characteristic smile settled on the thin lips. "M-m," he hummed, "Woo Fang not wrong, an'way."

Bolting impulsively forward, Mr. Fontaine spluttered: "W-what is it?"

Woo Fang opened his eyes, only to point in silence at the substance on the floor, which he continued to spill, like peas, from the queer-looking package.

"Why, it's rice!" exclaimed Brattle.

Woo Fang, looking at Hong Ting Long, nodded.

"Rice?" repeated the magnate. "Where in the world——"

"Lot to do with Hong Ting Long," droned Woo Fang, eyeing the Oriental rug-dealer narrowly. "You know much 'bout it, heh, Hong Ting Long?"

"Not one theeng!" snapped the Chinese.

Woo Fang turned aside. "Ver' well. Gonna get p'lice." He glanced at Mr. Fontaine. "We——"

Just then Kelly returned with the warm milk for which Woo Fang had dispatched him. Woo Fang took the milk and propping the weak yellow man's head on a knee, gently forced the dazed Chinaman to assimilate the liquid. Rising thereafter, Woo Fang nodded to Kelly. "Have p'liceman get ambulance," he directed. "Thees man goes to hospital. Have him placed under arrest so he can't escape. Ver' weak." He gave back his attention to Mr. Fontaine. "Where you keep tel'phone?"

"In the offices."

"We can go in now?"

"Of course." Mr. Fontaine signed to the watchman. "Unlock the door to the main offices, Kelly, before you attend to this fellow."

Kelly started away at once, while Woo Fang regarded his prisoner with growing impatience.

"Las' time gonna tell you, Hong Ting Long. If you not tell, me gonna have p'liceman take you 'way."

With a final attempt to conceal the fact of his duplicity, Hong Ting Long clutched Woo Fang by the arm, begging him in a rapid spurt of Chinese to let him go on his own recognizance.

"No!" flared Woo Fang. "Hong Ting Long has fooled 'merican friends long 'nough. No can go till Woo Fang knows what you come here for. Maybe Woo Fang know al'eady; an' if Woo Fang tell p'lice what him know, maybe," he grinned, "'merican Gov'nment be ver' glad to hear what Hong Ting Long been do; yes?"

Still hoping that somehow, perhaps through some miraculous intervention, he should not be exposed, the Chinese rug-dealer shook his head. "Me inn'cent!" he barked.

The door leading into the Fontaine offices stood open, and Woo Fang, with his unruly prisoner, stalked through. On the other side he waited for Brattle and Mr. Fontaine to catch up with him.

"You gonna tel'phone!" he ordered shortly.

"Where to?"

"M-m! Sen' for p'lice. Mus' come, now!"

Energetically Brattle leaned across the millionaire's desk, lifting the receiver. "Hello," he began; "give me pol——"

With a guttural cry of resignation, Hong Ting Long shoved Woo Fang aside, flinging himself upon Brattle. Struggling for possession of the instrument he stared beseechingly into the determined young man's face. "No, no, no!" he screeched. "Me gonna tell! No p'lice; no p'lice!"

Putting down the telephone, Brattle glanced at Woo Fang.

"Bes' maybe we not gonna call p'lice," decided Woo Fang, surveying Brattle sanguinely. Leisurely he stepped to Hong Ting Long's side, taking one of his arms and shaking him roughly.

"Las' chance, Hong Ting Long. Gonna tell? Gonna tell?"

"Me not try to kill!"

"M-m," said Woo Fang, "Woo Fang know you not kill him."

"What you know?" angled Hong Ting Long warily.

Woo Fang smiled wanly.

"Hong Ting Long," he pronounced quietly, "you b'long to Shrine of Yee Chow," he half questioned, half declared.

The effect of Woo Fang's words created a marked change in the cornered yellow man's expression. His short fat body began to tremble, his lips moved tremulously, as if in pagan prayer; yet he did not speak. Woo Fang tapped the man on the shoulder, jerking up the chin so he might peer into the frightened eyes.

"Hong Ting Long do b'long to Yee Chow, heh?" he grinned.

Defiantly the Oriental rug-dealer thrust his arms aloft, confessing montonously: "Me b'long to Yee Chow, yes!" He inspected each eager face in turn, but nobody seemed inclined to enter the curious cross-questioning beside Woo Fang. It was altogether unusual, this midnight third degree, staged in a prosaic business establishment, a place designed primarily for the amassing of money.

"An'," proceeded Woo Fang, "you have good reason to come here to-nigh', heh?"

Hong Ting Long nodded. "Me come for"—he hesitated, only to be reassured by a nod from the slender, swaying man who wavered above him—"for member of Yee Chow," he admitted slowly. In a gesture of despair he turned out his fat yellow hands. "But me not able to get man 'way, Woo Fang. Him mos' dead. Ugh! Me think him all dead!"

"M-m, me know," droned Woo Fang, "but how—how him almos' die?"

Hong Ting Long's moody, jet eyes were focused on the floor. "Him not got 'way f'om store-house quick 'nough."

Quickly Woo Fang glanced at Brattle and Mr. Fontaine, whereupon he nodded for the Celestial to proceed.

"Me come to see Mister Fontaine other day, telling him me like to get shipmen' of rug ordered. He say he not have time to sen' rug right 'way. All 'ighty. Me mos' wild, 'cause know frien' of Yee Chow was coming f'om China in thees rug shipmen'."

Mr. Fontaine gasped. "He doesn't mean, Woo Fang, that——"

"'Cause he smuggle man in rug f'om China," sang Woo Fang. "Man have rice to eat, yes? But water give out; yes? Eat not 'nough of rice, no?" Woo Fang shrugged his frail shoulders. "Starve, yes?" He frowned, glaring at Hong Ting Long. "Gonna tell why you smuggle man f'om China?"

The fidgeting rug-dealer appraised the little gathering, hoping to find the light of friendliness in at least the eyes of one, but he discovered he stood alone. He was hopelessly entangled; and worse, he was attempting to pit his wits against the one man in the world who understood absolutely the intricate ways of his kind—the implacable Woo Fang.

"All 'ighty; me tell," sighed Hong Ting Long; shaking his head sorrowfully. Suddenly facing Brattle, he directed towards the young man a pudgy finger, trembling with wrath. "Him make all thees trouble!" he spat. "Him one who start thees theeng! Why him got right to steal em'rald f'om honored Shrine of Yee Chow? Why him got right, heh?" he rasped. "Tha's why man come f'om China boat in rugs before him. Tha's why. Hear in China Brattle have em'rald of Yee Chow."

"Brattle not steal em'rald of Yee Chow," said Woo Fang severely.

"Not steal?" flashed Hong Ting Long. Delving into his clothes he produced in a newspaper clipping what he considered corroborating evidence. "What 'bout thees, eh?" he demanded.

In silence Woo Fang read the clipping, after which he passed it on to Mr. Fontaine and Brattle.

Jack Brattle sensed immediately the havoc the announce-

ment concerning the emerald's theft from him had wrought. When he had talked at length with newspaper reporters of the religious importance attached to the supposed emerald of Yee Chow he had fetched with him from the East, he had not considered the rabid member of the Yee Chow sect, in the person of Hong Ting Long, who was determined to have the jewel restored to the sacred shrine. No wonder Hong Ting Long had accepted with avidity the cordial invitation extended by Mr. Fontaine, a mere formality which the millionaire had not dreamed would be accepted, yet which the wily Chinese had used as a blind to cover up his sinister activities in quest of the precious stone. These Chinese, whom Hong Ting Long had been smuggling into the United States by his ingenious methods, all belonged to his Yee Chow religious order; and one particular member, who learned of Brattle's purposed voyage, with the emerald in his trust, had arrived and been released from the Fontaine establishment just in time to partake in the theft at the Long Island home. Brattle had noticed, when in the storeroom, that the end of the large rolled rug had given evidence of being opened or closed easily from within, thereby presenting liberties to the smuggled subject, so that, at at will, he might crawl from his cramped quarters during the voyage. Even while pent up in the loosely rolled rug, he had received sufficient air to bar suffocation.

"Brattle was given this stone by Chee Mung, dye and rug-dealer in Nanking," said Woo Fang. "Him not steal it."

"Can't help," grunted Hong Ting Long, doggedly. "Him have em'rald of Yee Chow. Me b'long to Yee Chow, an' sacred law say mus' get stone back!"

Woo Fang nodded dreamily. "M-m! So Hong Ting Long fix other card for Chinese frien' of Yee Chow, to steal em'rald f'om Brattle, heh?"

"Yes!" acknowledged the trapped Oriental. "Me sen' man to get em'rald las' nigh' when Mister Fontaine give dance. Nobody know who take em'rald of Yee Chow. Say man look like me; but nobody b'lieve Hong Ting Long take it. Hong Ting Long not took it. Other Yee Chow man, who get in with fake card, steal it. He get in, speak to Brattle, steal stone, but him 'fraid to take em'rald 'way with him. Ah! him gonna go back to-nigh' for em'rald of Yee Chow. Too late now to stop. Be there by now, an' gone!" he snickered triumphantly.

"To-nigh'!" grunted Woo Fang.

The circle of tense-faced men closed in. To-night, this very minute, the real thief was perhaps in the Fontaine country house, taking away with him Brattle's valuable trust—the secret formula of the Chinese dye process. Woo Fang had been there, yet—— Had he been led astray by some clever manipulation of a yellow man's mind, or did he know the inner workings of the dazzling wheel? The willowy form of the Chinese detective was swaying to and fro, a queer smile twisting his thin lips away from teeth which resembled worn piano keys.

"My home! This thief is going there?" exclaimed the millionaire, very pale. "Only Anson and Graves are there to protect my wife and Olga. Suppose——" he looked at Brattle, who, in turn, looked for help from Woo Fang.

"Him gone to Long Island long 'go," grunted the sneering Hong Ting Long. "By now em'rald of Yee Chow safe."

"Safe!" cried Brattle. "Safe! Why, you idiot, a whole industry depends on the recovery of that jewel. A precious dye formula, worth more than a thousand such emeralds, is secreted in the stone. Yes, and our business integrity hangs in the balance!" He sprang to the desk, clutching the telephone in his tremulous fingers. Tearing off the receiver, he demanded: "Long distance! Yes, long distance? Montauk 800. Please hurry—this is of vital importance!"

There was a tense lull. Fontaine and Woo Fang hung over the desk like chemists watching a wonderful experiment. Suddenly Brattle started backward as if the recipient of a blow. "What's that?" he muttered, "they don't answer? Wires dead—out of order?" Uncertainly, Brattle dropped the instrument on the desk with a clatter. "Hear that?" His face was white. "No answer! God knows what has happened. The women——"

Fontaine stumbled to his feet, gray, speechless. He motioned to Woo Fang, who maintained perfect calm.

"We go quick to Fontaine home," droned the implacable man. "Gonna see how fast aut'mobile get us there. Kelly can watch smuggled Chinaman and feed him the milk."

CHAPTER FIVE

SPEED laws were forgotten in the mad race for the Fontaine country seat. In the dead of night the great gray touring car, containing Woo Fang and his prisoner, Brattle and the millionaire, careered up Broadway until it reached Columbus Circle, when it turned east, traveling at top speed across the Fifty-ninth street bridge. On the state's macadam road through the whole stretch of Long Island the trip was covered with comparative ease, particularly at this time of night; and what ordinarily should have taken four hours or more over the Merrick road was done in just a bit more than three hours, with a cleared and safe highway.

Some time after three a. m. the huge machine, bearing the silent, anxious group of men, traversed the cinder road which led into the Fontaine place. Through the sea mists the car felt her way, gradually swinging around into the private road, thence up the slope to the large green-shingled dwelling, which, to Mr. Fontaine's surprise and dismay, was a blaze of light.

Brattle, the first out of the machine, distinguished in the drive ahead another motor car, no doubt a late arrival, too, since a man from that machine was just issuing from the tonneau. Darting forward, Brattle caught up with the darkly-clad figure, only to learn it was a local policeman from Easthampton. Anson, the lackey, accompanied the officer. The three men reached the top step of the veranda at precisely the same instant.

Wheeling around, the policeman seized Brattle by the arm. "Who are you?" he demanded.

"Brattle's my name," puffed Jack. "Coming with Mr. Fontaine; just in from New York. Couldn't get the house on the phone." Wide-eyed, he stared at the man in brass buttons. "Why, what's up?"

"Beyond me," returned the officer, shrugging his shoulders, perhaps at a loss for an intelligent reply. Directly he was jerked into the house by the excited Anson.

Brattle followed. An officer of the law! What could be his purpose here? Could something terrible have happened? Not having time to reason the least of his questions, the young man plunged on. Before the door leading into the drawing-room he halted. Inside, clinging hysterically together on a deep-blue divan, were Mrs. Fontaine and her daughter Olga. Rushing past them were Anson and the local policeman.

Discovering the sorry plight of his sweetheart and her mother, Brattle hastened to their side. Normally Olga Fontaine was a rarely beautiful girl. A large portion of her attractiveness was contained in her large expressive eyes, which seemed like luminous circles of blue sky peeking through fleecy white clouds. Her skin, in contrast,

was darkly olive, as of an esthete, with tumbling waves of auburn hair framing the flashing sapphires.

"Olga!" exclaimed Brattle, dropping to his knees by her side, at the same time taking her cold, unresponsive hands. "You—you——" He stared around in confusion.

"Oh, Jack," moaned Mrs. Fontaine, a rather stout, quietly dressed woman of middle age, "the horror! We've been here, alone, for, it seems, hours. Oh, to think of—of the horror!"

Olga's body drooped weakly against Brattle's breast, and the young girl repeated over and over, as if in a trance, "We'll never forget—never forget!"

At this instant Mr. Fontaine, followed by Woo Fang, entered the room. Seeing the condition of his wife, he hastened to her side. "What has happened, my dear?" he asked. Placing a trembling hand on his wife's throbbing forehead, he soothed: "Come, tell dad all about it."

"Tell you? Tell you?" Mrs. Fontaine's eyes rolled back, only to close at the mental vision of something actual she had seen. "Oh, it's terrible—terrible!" she moaned.

"Terrible! What? Come, come!"

"Yes," urged Brattle of Olga, "tell us what has got you into this frightful state. Both of you look the mere ghosts of yourselves."

Partially rising, Olga pointed at an imaginary being, shrieking: "See? The—the Chinaman!"

"The Chinaman?" Brattle, not understanding, glanced at Woo Fang, who stood looking on, with his head put slightly to one side.

Advancing slowly, Woo Fang asked: "Lady not mean me?"

"No, no! The—the——"

"The—thief?" prompted Jack, eagerly.

"I don't know! I don't know!" rejoined the terrified girl.

Woo Fang regarded the hysterical women for an instant, then, as if to indicate he did not understand tears or great joy, he stole quietly across the thick rugs, like a feline creature. He continued on into the ball-room, whence Anson and the policeman had gone.

Standing on the edge of the ball-room, Woo Fang swayed to and fro like a reed on the breeze. For fully a moment he did not advance, merely appraising the scene before him. One of the curtains in the wide door—the very same of the stork designs around which he had previously reconnoitered—was half torn down, as if a terrible struggle had taken place between the rooms. Looking beyond, Woo Fang saw the officer and Anson bending over two prostrate forms.

Woo Fang slanted his eyes, humming softly to himself, as was his invariable custom under great stress: "Ho-le-lo-lum." Then, with a peculiar movement, he strode forward, to look solemnly down on the figures which held the attention of the other two men.

Sprawled grotesquely on the floor was Graves, the fat butler, and near him was a short, stocky Chinese. Both men were dead. Graves lay on his back, with his face to the ceiling, his hands clenched tightly in back of his head. The unknown Chinese was not five feet away from the dead butler and, like him, was stabbed through the heart. Strangest of all, the carved, white ivory-handled dagger, evidently the instrument of both deaths, was stuck, blade down, into the hardwood floor, as if flung there by the murderer.

The policeman, who had been examining both bodies in a superficial manner, stood up, his conspicuous lips banded tightly together. "Dead for some little time," he muttered.

"And to think," said the dazed Anson, "it only happened a little before I got you here!"

"How long 'go?" asked Woo Fang.

The lackey turned on the implacable Oriental, somewhat confused. "Who are you?" he demanded.

"Heh?" Woo Fang looked at Brattle, who had joined the group.

"Why, this is Woo Fang, Anson. You should know. You saw him earlier in the day."

"Woo Fang?" repeated the lackey, shaking his head.

"Of course," added Mr. Fontaine, overhearing the last.

"There must be some mistake," went on the man of service. "This dead Chink got into the house that way——"

"What way?" asked Woo Fang.

"By saying he was you."

"You let thees man in?"

"I did."

"But you knew Woo Fang was with us," reminded the millionaire.

"I didn't know, sir," replied the lackey. "I went off duty before you left for New York, and I didn't know for certain that Woo Fang had gone with you. I knew nothing of your plans, if I may be so bold as to contradict, sir; so when this man applied for admission, I let him come in."

"And then what?" asked the policeman.

"The Chinaman said he wanted to see Mr. Fontaine, so I told him to wait the master's return in the drawing-room."

"You say Mister Fontaine was out?" asked Woo Fang.

"That's exactly what I told him."

"An' he go into drawing-room?"

"Yes; I took him in."

"Where was ladies then?"

"Upstairs."

"M-m! What happen next?"

"Well, it's sort of hazy to me, but I think Graves, who really had the evening off, came from his quarters in the bungalow, and happened to go in where this Chinaman was."

"An' Graves—when he come f'om room?"

Anson's eyes dropped, his voice faltered. "He—he didn't come out," he related finally.

"How you know all 'bout thees?"—with a wide sweep of slender arms towards the two dead men.

"I heard the struggle."

"Huh! An' you go in?"

"Yes; the lights were out."

"Huh! Lights out, heh?" mused Woo Fang. "Ver' good. Nex' what you do?"

"Why, I—— Well, to be truthful, I was afraid to go in right then."

"Why you 'fraid?" Woo Fang watched Anson closely.

"Because"—and the man's face paled—"I heard a groan. God! I never heard anything like it."

"Huh! Who shut off lights?"

"I'm sure Graves didn't."

"Then who?"

"It's the work of this dead Chink!" declared the policeman.

Woo Fang turned around, gently pushing Tee Tee aside, to lead Hong Ting Long into view. With his thin lips twisting coldly away from his conspicuous teeth, Woo Fang snarled:

"Nice, like hell, Hong Ting Long! See what you done? Nice? You know thees dead Chinese? Is he man you sen' to get em'rald of Yee Chow?"

Hong Ting Long's lips trembled, his beady eyes bulged. "Lemme go, Woo Fang," he grunted, struggling hopelessly. "Me not like see him—dead!"

Woo Fang dragged the slain man's accomplice nearer. "Speak truth, Hong Ting Long. Thees is your man?"

"Yes, Woo Fang. Him man. Him man me sen' to get em'rald of Yee Chow."

"M-m," sang Woo Fang. He turned the culprit over to Mr. Fontaine and the officer. Abruptly he glanced at Anson. "Woo Fang un'erstan's tel'phone not working," he said slowly. "You know where wire was put on bum?"

"I tried to use the phone," explained the servant, "but I couldn't get Central. I tried and tried."

"Ver' good," said Woo Fang, "but we getting 'way in front of story. Woo Fang want to know how you discover thees murder, Anson?"

"Oh, I was telling you that—— Well, I left off where I was standing in the hall. I heard a peculiar noise, a sort of groan. You know how anybody feels when he's standing alone and hears such a sound. At first I didn't know what to make of it, or what to do. I looked into the drawing-room, and—— Well, the lights were out."

"Nex'?" prompted Woo Fang.

"I was for entering, but something held me back. The darkness scared me, and I also remembered, sudden-like, that the man who said he was you was supposed to be in there. Then I called out: 'Graves! I say, Graves!' You see, it had sounded, I thought, like the butler, and I called to make sure. But Graves didn't answer me. I called again, louder this time: 'Graves! Oh, Graves!' Not receiving any reply, I started into the drawing-room, which, as I've said, was pitch dark.

"All through the drawing-room I heard no sound, and naturally could see nothing. Coming closer to this room I heard another groan, but it didn't sound like Graves this time. No, I don't think it sounded like Graves. It was like a rough rattle, coming from an animal's throat.

"I stopped still, afraid to move. I knew it was useless to run, in case I was a marked man; and I didn't feel like rushing forward towards where the awful sounds came from. I said I couldn't see a blessed thing, and I couldn't. Nights, as you know, are dark when they chose to be out here. But I was saying I'd heard another moan. After that all was quiet. You know how that is? It's the worst feeling in the world, to be alone at a moment like that, especially when it's still after a tussle."

"There was fights?" asked Woo Fang.

"There must have been, because things were pulled every-which-way. I guess I was a coward for not going in to help Graves, but the thought—the thought of that Chinaman in there, and the darkness, and the terrible groans—made chills hold me where I stood. I couldn't move, I couldn't yell, though I tried hard enough. Mr. Fontaine knows I'm ordinarily a pretty brave man. Usually I'm about on a par with the average, but—— Well, I simply couldn't get up nerve to come into this room when I thought it was all up with somebody. Of course, had I been armed——"

"You might have seized the andirons from the library fire-place," remarked Mr. Fontain, from a very dry throat.

"Oh, yes, I might have done lots of things—then," returned Anson with a wan smile. "But place yourself in my place, sir. Everybody here should probably have done exactly as I did." He looked around for comment, heard none, then proceeded. "At last, after the long silence, I came in here, switching on the lights. At the same time I did so, Mrs. Fontaine and Olga came running downstairs. They, foolishly, followed me in here. As soon as I saw, I warned them to go back, but you know how women always do just the opposite, sometimes, from what you tell them."

"And they looked?" asked Mr. Fontaine.

"They did, sir. Your wife saw all right, just after I switched on the lights."

"Switch lights on, where?" asked Woo Fang sharply.

"Here. I mean there, in the drawing-room," corrected Anson. "Then I noticed those curtains all pulled out of gear, as if somebody had been dragging on them."

"You have not touched curtains?" inquired Woo Fang.

"No; they're just as they were when I first came in. So I next came to the door of this, the ball-room; and though I saw the outline of the bodies I wasn't positive yet what was up. I was skittish on entering. I could hear nothing, and the silence alone scared me. I thought maybe the murderer might be waiting for another victim."

"You didn't know then, of course, that the murderer was himself lying dead?" said the policeman.

"No; of course not. You see, as the Chinaman hadn't sneaked away past me, I supposed he was hiding in this room somewhere."

"Anson think Graves was killed al'eady?" asked the Chinese detective.

"Tell the truth, I didn't dare think anything else after those awful inhuman noises, so——"

"Ver' good," grunted Woo Fang.

"I went into this room slowly. I wasn't taking any chances, as I've told you. Did I say I couldn't make out who was lying on the floor here? Guess so, and—— Now, that I remember, I kept my hands before me in the dim light as I walked."

"Anson not turn light on in ballroom here right 'way?" pressed Woo Fang, who was following the narrative with extraordinary care, even asking questions sometimes which seemed, perhaps, superfluous.

"Not yet; you see, I was sort of feeling my way. Let me see. Oh! and then I"—the lackey's face changed color, his lips moved tremulously, as if he were living anew the few haunting moments—"I stumbled—stumbled over poor Graves."

"Him—the butler?" asked Woo Fang, nodding.

"Yes, the butler. Wasn't a finer man living than Graves, I must say for him. Then I jumped aside, starting to run towards the wall to turn on the lights, only to go sprawling over this—this dead Chink. Neither Graves nor the stranger budged after I stumbled over them, so I thought they both were——"

"Dead!" droned Woo Fang, nodding and swaying to and fro.

"Yes," mumbled Anson, glancing quickly away from the silent forms.

"What you do nex'?"

"I found the switch and turned on the lights in here. Mrs. Fontaine and Miss Olga were standing in the door. Somehow, by the way the ladies looked, I knew it was all over with Graves and the Chinaman. I gave one look at Graves, finding he wasn't breathing. Done, I told myself. Then I rushed over to the ladies. They were screaming something awful, and I had the devil's own time trying to quiet them down and say there was no danger, because the thief himself was a goner. They seemed dazed by what they had seen, and I guess I was just as much dazed as them, though, for their sake, I kept a stiff upper lip. I dragged them to the other side of the drawing-room and made them sit down."

"Where they sit now?" asked Woo Fang.

"Yes; I believe so. After that I beat it out of the house for all I was worth, after trying to use the telephone. Graves, you know, and I were the only servants in the house. The maids were in their cottage, the matter of a quarter mile back. I know I should have had better sense than to leave the women alone, but I did what first

came into my head, after not getting an answer on the phone."

"Which tel'phone?" demanded Woo. Fang.

"The one in the hall."

"M-m!" hummed the attentive man.

"So," continued Anson, "I ran out into the garage, hopped into Miss Olga's racer, hurrying to Easthampton. This policeman I fetched back with me. From that town we telephoned to Bayshore, where we learned several New York detectives live, and the authorities promised to have them start here as soon as possible." Anson stopped speaking, appraising the tense group with a weary shake of the head. "That's about all I know."

Supplementing Anson's explanation by concrete evidence of their existence, the heavy tread of the men in question sounded in the outer hall, and three men stood hesitating for an instant on the threshold of the ball-room. With a curt nod, one of the men, a medium-sized person, clad in a tight-fitting suit of black, stepped energetically forward towards the policeman, who had been laboriously jotting down notes. The other two were the promised detectives from Bayshore, attaches of the Central Detective Bureau of New York City, who had been home, off duty. The middle-aged official, who had advanced at once, was the coroner from Easthampton, and had been inaccessible when Anson had returned with the policeman, but had been picked up by the two detectives.

"Well," said the coroner brusquely, "I'm sorry I could not get here with the Fontaine servant who called for me." His eyes rolled past the silent group, discovering the bodies of Graves and the Chinese.

"I couldn't wait for you," explained Anson. "The ladies were here all alone, and it's quite a drive back along the cinder road, you know. There was no telling what might happen."

"Lonely country around here, no doubt," confessed the business-like coroner. He moved forward, glancing down at the quiet figures.

"What is this, McAlister?" he asked the policeman, "murder?"

The officer shook his head. "I'm not certain about that," he replied.

Hemingway narrowed his eyes. "You mean you don't know?"

"That's it exactly."

"Then what does that mean?" he demanded, looking around, at the same time directing attention to the recumbent bodies.

"I'd say it's out and out murder," blurted Mr. Fontaine.

Hemingway faced around quickly. "And who are you, sir?"

"I am Mr. Fontaine."

"Oh, beg your pardon; just wanted to know," bowed the coroner. "Want to get things straight around here. May I ask what leads you to believe it's murder, Mr. Fontaine?"

"For the simple reason that it couldn't be anything else."

"You witnessed the crime?"

"Heavens, no!"

"Well, then?"

"Everything points to that conclusion," declared the magnate with conviction.

Hemingway passed again to where the dead men lay. Carefully he examined the positions of the bodies, sought the location of the wounds, yet he was particular not to disturb the postures. Stepping back into the group of silent men, the coroner continued: "Please explain just what you mean by murder, Mr. Fontaine?"

"I mean that my faithful butler was stabbed by that damnable Chinese!"

"The white man was your butler?"

"Yes; poor Graves!"

"Um," mused Hemingway, pressing his lips together with a forefinger and a thumb. "I don't see how you arrive at that solution, Mr. Fontaine."

"And why not?"

"Because the Chinaman was also stabbed through the heart."

"Well?"

"It must have been the other way around," declared Hemingway, with a firm nod.

"Perhaps Graves did kill him first; though, if he did, it was an act of self-defense."

"No doubt."

"I'm positive of that." To enlighten the Coroner, Mr. Fontaine told briefly of his companions' movements during the full course of the evening, from the time they had returned to New York from Long Island; relating, moreover, of Hong Ting Long's ingenious plan to recover the emerald of Yee Chow, which, it was explained, the wily Celestial had set out to obtain at any cost. The magnate completed his story by reviewing the mad haste which had governed them in attempting to reach the country seat before Hong Ting Long's accomplice placed his nefarious plan into execution.

"And this is the fellow this Chinese rug-dealer sent to get the emerald?" said Hemingway, after the millionaire had done speaking.

"Hong Ting Long has admitted his guilt," rejoined Mr. Fontaine. "He confessed to Woo Fang——"

Hemingway opened his eyes in surprise. "Woo Fang?" he repeated. "You don't mean he's here?"

"Yes; in this room." The rug importer glanced around the circle of faces, only to find Woo Fang was missing. "Why, that's odd; he was here a moment ago," he explained in some confusion.

From behind the curtain of the stork designs, Woo Fang stepped quietly. This was the drapery about which he had acted so strangely when first he had entered the ball-room during the afternoon. Looking at Hemingway, with his deep-socketed eyes glowing magnetically, he sang: "You speak name of Woo Fang?" And baring his large, square teeth, that seemed so much like worn piano keys, he bowed. Meanwhile, the two detectives who had been following events with deep interest, joined the group.

"I was mentioning you in the case," replied Mr. Fontaine, affably. "As a mere formality, perhaps, the coroner should like to ask you a few questions."

Woo Fang, smiling wanly, stared straight at Hemingway, in his hyperhypnotic fashion.

"Him like to ask what?"

"Well, to come down to hard pan, I'd like to know just what you've learned about this affair?" said the coroner.

Slowly Woo Fang folded his long slender arms across his flat chest. "Woo Fang got no-theeng to say," he replied evenly.

"What do you mean, nothing?" blinked Hemingway.

Woo Fang shook his head. "Woo Fang watchacall up him gum-tree; yes?" he smiled.

"But Mr. Fontaine said——"

Woo Fang turned quietly on the millionaire. "What you say, huh?" he inquired, inclining his head, atop which the glistening black queue was coiled, like a living thing, ready to spring.

"I haven't said anything definite," pleaded the magnate.

"You said Woo Fang made this man Hong Ting Long confess," contradicted the coroner.

"Yes, I did say that much."

Hemingway learned nothing of moment from Woo Fang, and turned away, somewhat miffed, to view the bodies again. "The main thing to determine," he was saying, "is which of these two men committed the actual crime."

Morgan stepped quickly forward. "I should say," he ventured, "that this Chinaman was stabbed first by the butler. He got it through the heart; so that is the natural inference."

Hemingway looked up, pondering. "If that is so, how was the butler killed? It is not reasonable to suppose he committed suicide."

"No," replied the detective slowly, "not suicide. Probably—er—stabbed somehow by the Chink."

"You mean before the Chinese himself was stabbed?"

"I should think so."

"Then why not the other way around? One means may be as plausible as another."

Morgan disagreed on this point. "I should say my original contention was correct," he continued. "As you will see, the butler was naturally a more powerful man than the Chinese, and I don't believe the Chink was strong enough to deal a death-blow of sufficient force, after being stabbed, to finish the butler."

"Graves was a very powerful man," said Mr. Fontaine.

"There," said Morgan. "Now, if the butler was at all on his guard, and any man would be when his life hangs in the balance, there'd have been no chance for the Chinaman to get the knife away from him, once he had wrested it from the yellow man."

"But the ivory-handled knife did not belong to Graves," said Anson.

"It was never in this house before, to my knowledge," declared the millionaire.

"I'm sure of that," persisted Anson, nodding. "You can see by the ivory handle and the dragon carvings that it is of Oriental make." He stooped to release the dagger from its bed in the floor, but was detained by a swift movement from the coroner.

"No; for the present leave it where it is," he ordered. Glancing around the circle of anxious faces, he continued: "We'll grant your contention on this hypothesis, Morgan: That men sometimes have accomplished wonderful feats of endurance, even after receiving mortal wounds. This butler, on that basis, may have been in all medical terms a dead man; yet, determined to stop the thief from carrying out his project, he was suddenly gifted with superhuman strength and surprised the Chinese by tearing the knife from his hand, in turn stabbing him. So far, so good. Naturally the Chinese was on the aggressive. Let us say he came here, as we are led to believe by all circumstances, to rob the house, or, definitely, to secure the emerald he had stolen on the previous night. We'll accept from the evidence, however meager it is, that the butler surprised the intruder while he was in the act of stealing the emerald. And after that they must have grappled, as conditions around here seem to indicate. And then this man——"

"Anson's my name, sir."

"Anson heard a groan?"

"I did, sir."

"And it sounded like?"

"I couldn't say for sure."

"No use in trying to probe further," said the coroner curtly. "I imagined if you knew, if you could have told which man cried out first, we might place the stabbing in that way. But we stop now against a blank wall. We can't ferret the thing, from that angle, further. I'll have a doctor up here to go over the bodies."

"But the manner of their deaths is clear now," said Morgan.

"Reasonably clear; but I want a professional report. All I know, positively, is that both men are dead."

"You agree with my theory?" went on Morgan.

"I dare say you have struck the correct solution."

"Yes; but what of the motive?" interjected Brattle. "Where is the emerald?"

"Um, yes," agreed Hemingway, nervously clearing his throat. "The emerald! That, as we know, furnished the motive."

Quietly Woo Fang swayed forward. He suggested: "Maybe if Mister Cor'ner look in butler's hand, him fin'——"

Hemingway wheeled around.

"Where—which hand?"

"Right hand—one which is closed," droned Woo Fang.

Turning back, the coroner's eye caught the glint of something green through the tightly clenched fingers of the dead Graves. Springing forward, he wrenched back the set fingers, then stood up, exhibiting a brilliant emerald.

"At last!" gasped Brattle, darting eagerly to Hemingway's side. "At last the emerald and the formula."

"Thank heaven we're beginning to see light!" exclaimed the coroner. Mr. Fontaine, awed, could not utter a word.

For fully a moment the deeply impressed spectators stared at the gleaming jewel, which suggested to them all that was sinister.

"This represents the motive for the crime," pronounced Hemingway professionally. "This is the emerald of Yee Chow, Hong Ting Long?"

The man under arrest nodded vigorously as he examined the stone. "Ah!" he cried happily, "emerald of Yee Chow!"

Brattle and Woo Fang next examined the emerald, and Brattle, after a close inspection, started back in dismay: "That's not my emerald!" he exclaimed bitterly. "This stone has no hole in it through the center, yet it is almost identical in size! And the—the formula's not there!"

Woo Fang, the secretive, took the green mass in his long slender fingers, a marvellous, priceless emerald from which a thousand lights of antiquity seemed to glow. Over and over in his concave palm he turned the gleaming jewel.

"M-m!" he sang, swaying to and fro, with his conical spiral of hair glistening, his deep-socketed eyes closed, his thin lips drawn tightly across his large teeth. "Thees seem like em'rald of Yee Chow—em'rald of Yee Chow—but Woo Fang guess——" His voice trailed off in a whisper. "No," he said, suddenly alert, "Woo Fang guess him keep quiet."

"But this can't be. If the stone I had was the emerald of Yee Chow, then this must be an imitation."

CHAPTER SIX

THE coroner and detectives had departed, promising later to return. Facing Woo Fang, Mr. Fontaine said: "To make sure of the safe recovery of that Chinese dye formula, it would be worth——"

"A million dollars to us in the long run," rapidly calculated Brattle.

"Heh! Me scheme?" droned Woo Fang, touching with delicate finger-tips his concave chest.

The importer nodded solemnly.

Woo Fang smiled wanly. "P'lice or cor'ner not make Woo Fang speak, did he?"

"I'm just as glad you had no information for them,"

returned the magnate, "since they might have jumbled matters." He added: "I must confess I talked too much, though it was through being so upset."

"M-m!" sang Woo Fang, "some p'lice him damn fool."

"You didn't agree with their findings?" asked Brattle, surprised.

Woo Fang slowly shook his head and rose, trailing into the drawing-room, thence to the curtain which had almost been dragged from its fixture. "Come here!" commanded the ghostly yellow man, turning lightly around.

Mr. Fontaine and Brattle hastened across the room, to stand expectantly beside Woo Fang. Silently he was holding up the lower end of the drapery for their inspection. This curtain was double-sided—made in two pieces—sewn together at the top and bottom, as an ordinary garment with a lining. Thus, at the lower hem, there existed a sort of pocket, running the whole length of the drapery. About an inch above the hem the men distinguished a slit several inches long, a rent evidently made by a sharp knife.

"Just what has this to do with the formula?" asked Brattle, regarding anxiously the enigmatic Woo Fang.

"You not know why thees is here?" queried Woo Fang, abruptly releasing the curtain and stepping back. "You 'member Woo Fang was 'lone here thees mo'ning?"

Brattle and Mr. Fontaine both nodded.

"Huh!" grunted Woo Fang. "Even thees mo'ning Woo Fang fin' trace of dead Chin'man, who was here before; but not could fin' where him put stone. Trace him to other curtain—that one on other side of thees door—but not could fin' what me seek. Guess Woo Fang was fooled; maybe go to wrong curtain. Thees hole in curtain was where em'rald of Yee Chow was put after man steal it f'om Brattle."

"But this stone was not stolen from me," declared Brattle. "The stone the formula was in had a hole in it."

"M-m!" sang Woo Fang. "Not through looking for other stone yet." He closed his eyes, breaking forth into his disconnected humming: "Ho-lum-le-lo-lee."

Anson, who happened to enter the room at this juncture, overheard that part of the conversation pertaining to the curtain.

"Perhaps," he interrupted, "I can explain to Woo Fang why he was unsuccessful this morning. If you were thrown off the track it was because, unknown to you, the maids had taken down the curtains for a while during the forenoon, and when they put them up again, after having them on the line, they changed them about."

Woo Fang smiled benevolently at the servant. "Much thank," he droned. The gaunt face was turned upward, as if listening to an inward voice, and the swaying Celestial added slowly: "Woo Fang think him wrong once, but now him know he not wrong a-tall."

CHAPTER SEVEN

ANSON had spread a light luncheon on the dining-room table for the worn-out men. When they filed through the hall and into the somber dining-room, Brattle and Mr. Fontaine sat quite close to one another, while Woo Fang, preferably, sat on the opposite side of the table, with the napping Tee Tee at his heels.

Brattle and Mr. Fontaine watched Woo Fang as if enchanted, yet he appeared quite oblivious of their intent scrutiny. The banjo clock, an old antique, ticked on; the distant thunder of the surf rumbled, to die gently away; the slight wind outside moaned drearily through the shutters.

Suddenly Woo Fang sat upright. "M-m!" he sang, setting down his cup with a porcelain click. "Brattle and Mister Fontaine 'fraid Woo Fang was not gonna fin' form'la; yes?"

"I'm beginning to think we're up against it," sighed Brattle, uneasily.

Mr. Fontaine leaned tensely across the table. "Personally," he said, "I think you know more than you've told us."

"Mister Fontaine think so?" smiled Woo Fang.

"I certainly do."

"Huh!" grunted Woo Fang. "Maybe Woo Fang do know much; maybe he not know much. An'how, him fin' lots theengs not right," he snorted.

Brattle leaned forward eagerly. "Just what do you know?" he asked.

Continuing to contract his lips, Woo Fang whistled in his unmelodious manner, at the same time staring towards the ceiling. "Woo Fang have not say him know an'theeng," he replied.

"Of course not; but I naturally supposed you would not admit anything while the coroner and detectives were here, so long as they did not fetch harm to anybody who was innocent." Brattle left the table, circling it swiftly, and sitting down beside the uncommunicative man. "Am I not right?"

"Maybe," droned Woo Fang.

"So you——"

Abruptly Woo Fang stood up, and Tee Tee, alarmed, bristled. "Woo Fang is a'mos' certain who kill butler man," he declared with a flourish of his fan-like hands.

"Somebody in this—this house, beside the dead Chinese?" gasped Mr. Fontaine.

"Somebody," hummed Woo Fang.

"Then, then——" spluttered Brattle, standing up with Woo Fang.

Mr. Fontaine scraped to his feet, pacing along the table nervously. His head was bowed, his hands behind his square back. Pausing opposite the immobile Woo Fang, he asked:

"If the crime was not committed by either of these two dead men, as you'd make us believe, who could have done it?"

Anson, who had been standing in the door, listening, tiptoed away.

Smiling wanly, Woo Fang discovered new interests in the frescoes that bordered the ceiling, while at the same time he broke forth with: "Ho-lum-lo-le." Stopping, he looked up. "Neither Brattle nor Mister Fontaine thought somebody else do murder?" he inquired.

"Never gave such a thing a thought," said Mr. Fontaine, eyeing the Chinese detective incredulously. "For instance, who?"

"Somebody else mus' have done it," determined the swaying Chinese.

"But I can't conceive of it!" exclaimed Brattle, thoroughly confused. "There's no evidence of another soul having been on the premises. The coroner was certain on that score, so were the two New York detectives. Anson, as you know, saw nobody prowling around, outside of the dead Chinese, who, luckily, is past prowling. Anson let nobody into the house except Hong Ting Long's accomplice."

During this hot argument, Woo Fang regarded Brattle tolerantly. When the young man, so vitally interested, had done, the implacable man shrugged his frail shoulders, turning out his hands. "Huh, you much seem like detective man who come here with Hem'way. 'Member, Brattle, thees detective man fin' not one theeng!" The willowy figure wavered to and fro, a cold smile on his thin lips.

"Good man, those detectives, eh?" he nodded sarcastically. "Good man for no-theeng!"

Mr. Fontaine, perceiving the fretful lines on Woo Fang's brow, hastened to reassure him. "We have been naturally nervous, Woo Fang," he said. "You can well understand that. So, if you will overlook us when we appear to snap at you for no apparent reason, remember that this is something new to us—thieves, and killing folks almost under our eyes! I, for one, am all in. I couldn't go through another night like this and survive, I'm sure."

"Woo Fang guess him un'erstan'," came the slow rejoinder. "Mister Fontaine want to know one theeng: Woo Fang not many times go wrong. M-m!" and he closed his eyes in retrospect. "Maybe you 'member tel'phone wire is cut?" he reminded.

"Yes, yes; I recollect Anson mentioned that—especially our own anxiety in not being able to get the house by phone."

"M-m!" sang Woo Fang, "me 'member wire cut, too. Guess ev'body else forget. Ah, an' while him detective man stan' 'round an' do no-theeng, Woo Fang was in hall looking for cut wire."

"I've imagined right along," said Brattle, "that Hong Ting Long's man must have cut the wires as soon as he had come in."

Woo Fang shook his head. "When Anson say Hong Ting Long thief cut wires, him wrong. Thief not cut wires. Him go into drawing-room an' not come back 'gain."

"But Anson, you know, might not have watched him carefully," said Brattle.

"Hong Ting Long thief not do it," reiterated Woo Fang, stubbornly. Quietly he trailed along the room, stepping into the hall, when he nodded for his companions to follow him.

Woo Fang continued till he reached the massive front door, which was closed. Then, when Mr. Fontaine and Brattle had caught up with him, he carefully drew from his garments a leather knife scabbard, about seven inches long.

Recoiling, Brattle swallowed hard. "What's that?" he asked, knowing what it was, but putting the question in an involuntary way.

Woo Fang smiled serenely. "Me keep it," he said.

"But what——" began the millionaire.

"B'long to knife."

"Not the——"

"Knife that kill butler man and Chin'man," droned Woo Fang colorlessly.

"This is a step forward," exclaimed Brattle. "Where'd you find it?"

"Huh! Fin' behin' door," grunted Woo Fang, returning to the central part of the hall.

With his chin on his knuckles Mr. Fontaine stood pondering. "Now that I consider things," he said, "there must have been somebody else here."

Woo Fang, standing like stone, raised a hand to his lips. "Quiet!" he snapped. "Air has ears!"

Brattle shivered, glancing apprehensively about, taking cognizance of the deceptive shadows in the hall, while Mr. Fontaine backed slowly towards the staircase.

Staring down at the leather scabbard, Woo Fang advanced towards a place under the stairs, where a panel-like door opened on a small hinge. The door, ten inches square, hung wide. Within were numerous switches and fuses, besides the telephone wires which connected with the house. Pausing before the door, Woo Fang indicated the space with a flourish of his fan-like hands.

"Wires cut here," he pronounced drearily.

Fontaine and Brattle exchanged glances. Moving to the spot, they found Woo Fang was right; the wires had been neatly clipped, rendering the telephone service useless. Now the house on the vast expanse of sand dunes, and within range of the ocean's cymbals, was cut completely from civilization.

Pale, Mr. Fontaine inquired hoarsely: "You—you don't really think the dead Chinese was responsible?"

Woo Fang shook his head, pronouncing monotonously: "Somebody else—somebody else;" while Tee Tee, perking his ears as if detecting something no human ears could hear, whined.

For a moment, silence, save the far-away low of the waves, the chant of the early morning wind through the blinds and over the moor.

"Woo Fang know Hong Ting Long man not do thees murder," droned Woo Fang dreamily. His eyes seemed to see far away as he swayed gently to and fro. "Me not smell sign of killed man here."

By the stairs the grandfather clock ticked slowly, the pendulum swaying steadily back and forth, as if in rhythm with Woo Fang's swaying figure. Tick-tock, tick-tock.

"'Nother man do thees murder in Fontaine house," hummed Woo Fang. "Same man that bring knife. Thees man touch wire, him touch knife, him touch case for knife."

"You—you've compared these things?" said Brattle, tremulous, and looking instinctively from side to side.

Gazing abstractedly away, Woo Fang nodded. His countenance wore a sort of serene sadness, while his gaunt body swayed and swayed like an ungainly willow bending under the lash of the wind. "All life," he resumed, "Woo Fang work, work, work. Develop, develop, develop. Ah," he sang, "compare, compare, compare. An' now—hm," he crooned strangely through his square teeth, "some men not b'lieve what Woo Fang can do. Not b'lieve me have smell like dog." His eyes blazed, his thin lips banded tightly. "Tha's why," he grunted vindictively, "Woo Fang not much help p'lice, tha's why him not help an'body who not b'lieve!" He frowned. "Tha's why me gonna get back form'la for Brattle an' Mister Fontaine, 'cause they b'lieve! Then—— Ah! Woo Fang gonna say goo'-by!" He shut his eyes, putting his fan-like hands behind his back. "Soon maybe me gonna go Cal'fornia, where air is like my China. Oh, China!" he sang sadly, "oh, China! M-m! Land of that lotus flower an' home of Woo Fang."

Stopping abruptly, Woo Fang passed like a long shadow up and down the hall, with Tee Tee, his sleek Russian wolf-hound, following closely at his heels.

"Better gonna go to bed," he said presently. "You, too, Brattle."

"But suppose—suppose this unknown——" suggested the pale magnate.

"Leave house in hands of Woo Fang," directed the Eternal Enigma. "Where me gonna sleep?"

"The first room at the top of these stairs," said Mr. Fontaine. "You may go up with us now."

"No." Woo Fang shook his head firmly. "Woo Fang never sleep till him finish hunt for form'la. Never sleep!" he repeated. "Mister Fontaine gonna tell Anson man to make good fire in fireplace of drawing-room?"

"You wish it?"

"M-m! Now!"

Ringing a bell connecting with the kitchen, Mr. Fontaine summoned Anson. "You will replenish the fire in the drawing-room grate, Anson."

"Yes, sir."

"And you will be at Woo Fang's disposal for the balance of the night."

Woo Fang appraised Anson before he turned to put the first order into execution.

"Coat an' hat," he directed.

Brattle looked askance at Woo Fang. "You're not going out?"

"M-m," sang Woo Fang, closing his eyes.

"But—— Why, you'll be a marked man if there is another prowling outside the house."

"Maybe," droned Woo Fang, shrugging his frail shoulders. Anson had followed his bidding, and the stooping man put out his arms for the coat, afterwards accepting his hat. Then, moving slowly to the switches, he extinguished the lights.

Darkness. Cimmerian darkness. The hour before dawn, when night is blackest.

Somewhere in the hall Anson moved away. "I'll attend to the fire," he said in a muffled tone.

"No lights," cautioned Woo Fang.

"None," returned Anson.

Brattle heard Woo Fang and Tee Tee passing towards the outside door. "You—you'll soon be back, Woo Fang?" he asked breathlessly.

"Maybe," came the weird, droning response. "Brattle an' Mister Fontaine go to bed."

The door opened; billows of mist from the sea swept in, accompanied by the tang of salt air. A figure glided into the soggy night, with the moon long since gone and day not so far distant through the deep-leaden sky.

In the hall, tick-tick, tick-tock. The door closed softly. The house on the dreary moor was silent save for the timid, creaking steps of two awed men, who mounted stealthily towards the second floor to rest, sleepless, for perhaps hours.

CHAPTER EIGHT

BEFORE the door, as soon as he had closed it, Woo Fang stood, listening. For several moments he stood thus, with his head tilted oddly to one side, and Tee Tee standing rigidly by, sniffing of the sharp sea air. The heavy mist wet the silent man's face, and shivering, he stalked to the edge of the steps, where he paused again to listen.

God's great silences on land were disturbed only by the heave of the sea. Waves, large, blackish, cruel—waves that could not be seen, thundered on the beach like muffled cannon. Below, across the sand dunes, the wind brisked through the coarse grass, making low mumbling sounds, as of lost souls lifting voices in discontent. And all around, above, everywhere, was intense darkness, with menacing, unseen clouds scudding overhead, scattering the thick soggy mist, which made ghostly forms that were not.

Woo Fang descended the steps slowly, ever so carefully. Behind him, ever alert, trailed Tee Tee, now so strangely silhouetted in the uncertain depths. The canine's form assumed proportions not belonging ordinarily to its long, sinewy body. Now the animal was a white, fleecy blot on the road, again it was effaced altogether from Woo Fang's view.

Leaving the cinder road, Woo Fang crossed to the sand dunes, seeming by instinct to sense his direction. Up, up he went, then down into a deep hollow, where the unkempt grass caught around his ankles like the roots of a pond lily about an oar.

He continued on, now and again stopping still to listen in his peculiar fashion, and each time, when satisfied, he would proceed as before, yet always with that studied precision, that perennial care.

Soon the boom of the surf on the desolate beach sounded nearer, and several white bodies rushed overhead. Gulls! silent swans of the night. Everything was a sort of grotesquerie; things seemed shapen, yet they were misshapen. Nothing appeared real or earthly. The moor exuded an uncanny spell, as if brooding over an eternal secret and not the least afraid to murmur of its unrest.

Somewhere, riding on the waves off shore, sounded the mournful warning of a whistling buoy. Whoo, whoo-o-o! Whoo-who-o-o! And over all hung the steady drip-drip of the mist.

Suddenly Woo Fang halted, this time not in his customary manner. Tee Tee emitted a slight whine; and the wind soughed through the coarse grass in melancholy answer. Like a swaying reed, Woo Fang melted to the hollow in which he stood, listening.

What was that? He crouched low. The rhythmical beat of the waves continued; the gulls circled in greater numbers, curious since they had discovered life abroad in this desolate waste. Just ahead Woo Fang was sure he distinguished something moving, something large and swaying slightly, something unknown, uncertain. Down, down he crouched, with Tee Tee sprawling after his master's fashion; and the two were like stone.

The something—if really it was anything—cleared ahead; the wavering mass was gone. But, no; there it was again. There, to the left of Woo Fang. It seemed to issue from the ground, like dark, low-drifting smoke; a mass—something which was formidable. Indeed, something that was governed by a mind, since it did not move with the wind, but against it, taking care not to expose itself at a point which might imperil something mortal.

The mist coagulated overhead, covering the silent form of man and wolfhound, blotting temporarily the undecipherable; and the gulls swept to and fro, giving evidence of life in the hollow. Tossing at sea, the whistling buoy blew on: whoo, whoo-o-o, whoo-o-o.

On all sides Woo Fang looked, endeavoring to penetrate the Cimmerian depths of early morning darkness; but, for a time, he looked in vain. Not another sign did he see of the imaginary or concrete object which had reconnoitered with so much cunning.

Gradually he rose from the hollow, with his deep-socketed eyes half-closed, his fan-like hands pressed across his concave breast, his feet moving ahead with choppy strides. Presently he felt underfoot again the cinder roadbed. On both sides the sand dunes loomed darkly through the dripping mist, like crouching animals.

Ahead, in the road, just beyond a rise of ground, the thing wavered again; seeming to beckon, to antagonize, to challenge. Woo Fang stopped, swaying to and fro, as if on the mercy of the wind. Tee Tee stood bravely by his master, baring his teeth. Woo Fang showed his large, square teeth, too; while his eyes, wide open, watched speculatively the unknown mass ahead, which the mist obscured.

What was it? Woo Fang smiled coldly, drifting away to the nearest sand dune, against which he propped himself, becoming, visibly, a part of the drab whole. He was watched! Something knew he stalked abroad. But what?

The apparition was gone as suddenly as it had shaped the second time. The waves continued to rumble on the desolate shore; the wind moaned on overhead, with the gulls sobbing in their flight.

Woo Fang crawled over the sand dune, resting for some time on the other side. Once more he rose, stalking back by a different route, moving ever so cautiously, keeping his hands fixed across his breast as of a floating automaton, so stealthy was his progress.

Gaining the cinder road at a different point, he abruptly halted. Some distance behind him he detected the

muffled tread of feet. Was this—— But he left the road, taking refuge in a patch of grass, to wait.

On came the steps, crackling over the cinder road. Around a bend in the road a faint illumination shone through the mist. Who could be abroad at this hour with a lantern? There was not a house except the Fontaine place within a mile. To himself Woo Fang sang: "M-m!"

The light grew brighter; Woo Fang crouched low against the dark patch of grass. His dark garments concealed him completely. Tee Tee, trained to silence, was like dew drift on the sand dune, still as his waiting master.

The steps resounded louder, gradually drawing nigh. Leisurely the unknown progressed as if he had all time to reach his destination. Then Woo Fang distinguished the lamp to better advantage. It was small, like a round disk that a miner wears, yet it swayed gently from side to side, not three feet from the ground.

Implacable, Woo Fang waited. The steps grew apace, the form of a man wavered through the deceptive mist; then the lamp at the man's belt and the man himself were again swallowed by the night. Rising, Woo Fang uttered a sigh of relief. Only the United States Coast Patrol maintaining his strict vigil.

Quickly Woo Fang crossed the road, with Tee Tee sniffing at his heels. Like gaunt ghosts they were, moving through the sand dunes and damp hollows, with the whistling buoy calling hoarsely at sea, sounding like the voices of dead seamen calling once more to life from beneath the eternal green.

Presently Woo Fang reached the Fontaine house. After glancing carefully around, he mounted the steps; and, gaining the top, he stalked straight towards the door, perceiving through the windows, as he advanced, that the log-fire in the huge fireplace burned brightly.

Seeing in the uncertain darkness a square of white on the panel, Woo Fang stopped before the door. Moving closer he discovered the object was a piece of paper, made secure by a knife that had been stuck into the panel, through the center of the paper. Hanging from the knife-handle was a piece of cord and a tiny glass phial.

Ripping the dagger, paper, phial and bit of rope from the door, Woo Fang slipped noiselessly into the house. Swiftly he crossed to the fireplace, beyond which Anson lay napping in a great chair. In the glow of livid flames Woo Fang spread out the damp sheet of paper, reading in Chinese:

"Woo Fang must give up the hunt for the emerald of Yee Chow. He is treading on dangerous ground. If he continues to work for these Americans it will be necessary for him to accept the ancient sign of China, whereby his life shall be forfeited; or he may, should he choose, do away with himself by hanging, poison or the dagger. The Chinese methods await Woo Fang's pleasure."

Crushing the paper in his hand, Woo Fang reared his head like a wolf at bay. His under-lip, now cruel and quivering, protruded, baring his uneven teeth.

"Huh!" he spat, "gonna kill Woo Fang, eh?" He glanced around, snarling. "Gonna kill me! Tell me not to fin' em'rald of Yee Chow." He smiled savagely, swaying, with closed eyes. Alarmed by his master's agitation, Tee Tee whimpered, rubbing his moist nose against the slender man's legs; but Woo Fang waved the dog from him.

Getting down on his knees, away from the firelight, Woo Fang drew from his pocket a straw mule, shorn of its lining. This he pressed to his nostrils. Following which procedure he scented the phial, the bit of cord, the dagger and the sheet of paper.

"Mm," he sang, bobbing to and fro on his knees. His lips were distorted, his magnetic eyes strange to behold, his breath pulsing as he swayed. "Woo Fang not gonna fin' em'rald, hey?" he snorted. "Huh!" he growled, his voice rumbling in his throat. "Somebody gonna better watch!"

CHAPTER NINE

"ANSON!"

Startled, the lackey sprang from the chair. "Oh, it's——"

"Quiet!" Woo Fang raised a thin finger to his lips. "Not one sound!"

"But——"

"Anson gonna show Woo Fang upstairs."

"Where?"

"Mister Fontaine's room."

"You want him?"

"M-m! Quiet!" The silent-moving man glanced around, taking particular notice of the French windows facing the veranda. "Anson, Woo Fang not want you once to step in light."

"We are watched?"

"Maybe." Woo Fang trailed into the hall, Anson following mechanically.

The first dim light of day was in the sky; shadows were deep, figures grotesque, and Woo Fang, aware of night's release on things, worked swiftly. He waited for Anson to lead the way up the wide stairs, following with Tee Tee to Mr. Fontaine's door.

"Here!" said Anson, and stepped back.

Moving forward, Woo Fang tapped lightly with his small knuckles. Once, twice, thrice he knocked.

"Wh-who's there?" asked the millionaire, in a tremulous voice.

"Woo Fang!"

A key rattled in the lock; the door opening. Mr. Fontaine, fully clad, stood in the entry. "I couldn't sleep, and was waiting for you to return," he said.

Woo Fang nodded in the palest light, where everything loomed gray and figures assumed proportions of breathing apparitions. Bidding the magnate to retire into his room, he followed, whispering to the nervous man for a moment. Mr. Fontaine seemed puzzled by Woo Fang's request, but nodded nevertheless. "I think I have just what you want," he said, "though——"

A door opened on the hall; a figure slipped down the passage and into Mr. Fontaine's room. It was Brattle. "I heard you coming up the stairs," he said jerkily. "What's up?"

"We need your help," replied Mr. Fontaine. "I—I'm afraid I'm not equal to give a hand in this right now."

"This, what?"

Brattle was told quickly.

Quietly Anson, Woo Fang and Brattle stole into Mrs. Fontaine's boudoir. Woo Fang entered first, striking a match and holding it above his gleaming eyes. Looking around in the mellow circle the scant light afforded, he seemed satisfied, and snuffed out the match with a puff of the breath. Towards something heavy and tall Woo Fang shuffled. Stopping before this object, he turned to Brattle and Anson.

"Quick! Help Woo Fang get thees downstairs!"

The three men strained, edging forward with their load, the sad-eyed Woo Fang leading. Very carefully they carried the object from the room, heading towards the stairs, while Mr. Fontaine remained temporarily behind to regain his composure, for Woo Fang's sudden summons had startled him.

At the bottom of the stairs the men bore their burden into the drawing-room, where the logs still burned brightly. The light out of doors had not increased, seeming to hover between darkness and dawn.

Taking care not to venture within range of the fire's radiance, Woo Fang bade the men rest the object upright on the floor. While they were engaged in doing this, he trailed off to the French windows which looked on the veranda. One of the windows he unfastened, whereupon he drew down all the long shades.

Returning to the fascinated men, Woo Fang issued directions in rapid succession. Plainly he was laboring under high nervous tension. Meanwhile he was keeping account of the swiftly gaining light, which, did he not work with greater despatch, might prove disastrous to his well-laid plans.

"On'y few more minutes," sang Woo Fang, raucously; "on'y few more minutes. Then gonna fin' out, maybe. M-m! Gonna fin' out!" To the outside door he slipped for a moment, where he stood, listening. Returning, with all arrangements completed, he instructed Anson to draw up the shades as soon as he had calmly taken a place in a chair.

Mr. Fontaine came downstairs in time to witness Anson in the act of drawing up the shades, and at a signal from Brattle slid to the floor beside the expectant young man. The two vitally concerned men gazed in awe at Woo Fang, as if he were practising sorcery. What did he expect the bizarre maneuvers to bring forth? None could say; none could definitely guess. Everything was so hazy, so uncertain.

From the spot Woo Fang had selected the men to watch, they viewed him in much the same fashion as they should, had they been on the veranda. Woo Fang leaned forward, apparently towards one of the long, low windows, before which the curtains fluttered like strange strands. Woo Fang was revealed in an uncanny way, sitting in a sort of livid halo; and he seemed to be in a certain spot; yet there was something ethereal about him. He was waiting. But why? For what?

For a long interval he did not stir. He sat as one in death, with his head inclined a trifle, in that perennial attitude of listening. His eyes, now and again closed, stared intently into the deceptive light out of doors.

Somewhere on the house the wheezy creak of a blind smote the stillness, then the sobbing of gulls, who had builded a nest in the chimney overhead. Woo Fang, the strange, the saddest of the sad, did not stir. He was waiting. The smell of the burning logs permeated the air; the gulls continued to sob. Dawn was not far away.

Like an image, Woo Fang sat, now and then swaying slightly, and stooping, ever stooping, with his concave chest shelving away in the ephemereal light of the room. His deep-socketed, melancholy eyes glowered fiercely, his mouth was half agape, showing the worn, large teeth, so reminiscent of antiquated ivory piano keys. And his head was still tilted in that quaint attitude. Always listening. Listening! For what?

Presently, like the specter he suggested Woo Fang leaned slowly back in the chair. Everything was grayish, grayish—ghostly. Abruptly, through the farthest window which looked on the veranda, the tap-tap of cautious steps was perceptible. It struck one's senses as a cat treading over silk. Tap-tap, tap-tap-tap.

Silence.

The unlatched French window quietly bent inward, as if guided by the wind gusts which fretted across the dreary sand dunes. An opalescent light filtered through the windows, born of the sweeping mist and first streaks of dawn. Woo Fang, staring towards the slightly moving window frames, continued to sway slowly, as if momentarily expecting something. In the grotesque illumination he seemed like a genii, a representation of fancy.

Concealed in the shadows, Brattle and Mr. Fontaine did not budge, nor did the fascinated Anson. On the white window sill, in full view, rested a mute challenge to the unknown. Deposited thereon were the poison phial, the dagger, the piece of cord.

For a time the window stirred no more; the unseen hands had apparently been withdrawn. But soon the tap-tap on the veranda was again detected. The steps drew closer, and Woo Fang, whose exact position could not be determined by the confused occupants of the drawing-room, sat stone-still. His countenance, indominable as Confucius', shone in gaunt relief in the fire's glow; his luminous eyes were opened wide, seeming like glazed agate.

The movements on the veranda became bolder. The French panels drifted back, back, back. Straightening suddenly, Woo Fang drew from the folds of his long blouse the brilliant emerald, the green lump of mystery, for which men had already died and for which another seemed about to risk his life. Over and over Woo Fang turned the jewel in his long lean fingers, and its prismatic corruscations danced weirdly in the reddish glow, as of Neptune's eyes.

A shadow fell aslant the white window sill to vanish like black death. Woo Fang sat unmoved. He was as a frieze graven on the back of the chair.

For a long moment, silence.

The shadow came again, this time enlarging until a yellow, claw-like hand crept along the sill, even as a snake will crawl. Impenetrable, Woo Fang remained unruffled. Could it be possible that he was following this new development?

The hand came on, closer to the window frame, closer; the arm protruding through the open space behind the sinister hand. Then the dark head of a man loomed over the coping. At the uncertain distance the face was difficult to outline, but Woo Fang observed the skin appeared parched, the features sharp and pinched. The eyes and mouth leered in deep contempt. Did Woo Fang know this man?

Suddenly the hand of the intruder which was not in evidence clipped over the coping, and in the long bony fingers a revolver was tightly clutched. Without an instant's delay the muzzle was leveled at Woo Fang and there was a gush of smoke, a livid spurt of flame, a thunderous report, followed by countless pieces of glass showering about the room.

Springing to their feet, Brattle and Mr. Fontaine wanted to spring to Woo Fang's assistance. But would they not be acting rashly, since Woo Fang by now must be dead? Poor Woo Fang! He must have been killed instantly, caught as he was unawares. Was Woo Fang at last shorn of his uncanny ingenuity?

Like a long, slender stalk, a figure bounded from the shadows, seeming to issue from nowhere. The marauder was swiftly advancing towards the spot where Woo Fang lay, ostensibly dead. With a fierce cry the willowy man pounced upon the would-be assassin. Tee Tee, a vibrant streak of gray, sprang for the unknown's throat. Brattle, Anson and Mr. Fontaine, coming quickly forward, were astounded.

What they had supposed to be the sitting figure of Woo Fang had not been the Chinese detective at all! Instead they had been looking at his reflection in a tall, clear dressing mirror, placed accurately by Woo Fang in the deceptive light of the drawing-room. The intruder had vainly fired at the detective's reflection, shattering the wonderful mirror into a thousand bits.

Grunting, Woo Fang held the squirming thief under him on the floor. With one hand he searched the man's clothes, and suddenly he held forth, in the pale light of the growing dawn, the imitation of the Yee Chow emerald, the stone with the hole through the center, containing the priceless dye formula.

Scarcely credulous, Brattle dropped on his knees beside Woo Fang, whom he regarded as a sort of Aladdin. The implacable man merely muttered in his matter-of-fact manner:

"Anson! Lights!"

CHAPTER TEN

THE lights in the spacious drawing-room were aglow, the log-fire had been replenished. Crouching before the fire-place, with his arms and legs bound securely, was the tall, desperate-looking Chinese whom Woo Fang had contrived to trap.

A few feet away from the fire, reclining dreamily in a great Spanish leather chair, was Woo Fang, the immobile. His deep-socketed eyes were focused upon the cringing yellow man; and now and then his head swayed to and fro.

Anson entered, bearing a tray of steaming tea and crackers. Woo Fang accepted a cup, swallowed the tea quickly, ignoring the crackers. "No food yet," said he, looking at Mr. Fontaine. "Wife an' girl?" he inquired anxiously.

"They're quite all right," replied the millionaire with a sigh of great relief. "Thank God this awful tension is almost over. The revolver shot shocked them considerably."

"M-m," mused Woo Fang, staring at the bound yellow man, "him dang'rous. Good him caught." He smiled coldly at the glowering man. "You are Duke Po-Tsia?" he asked.

The man nodded rigorously.

Woo Fang closed his eyes. "Lie!" he spat.

"Surely," said Brattle, "this fellow is no Chinese duke?"

Woo Fang sat slightly forward, folding his thin hands on his knees. "Firs'," he resumed, ignoring the question, "me gonna tell few theeng." He paused, shutting his eyes, to open them again and squint moodily at the fire. "Thees man here come to Pell street an' tell me him Duke Po-Tsia of China. He say he b'long to Manchu fam'ly; but him not duke. Him look lot like Duke Po-Tsia. But thees Highbinder man, when he come to Woo Fang's home, prove him not real duke by way he act. He come to see me, smoke cig'rette, then pick up cig'rette when he go so Woo Fang cannot smell him an' compare. Ver' good, but Highbinder leave slipper outsi', which Woo Fang keep an' use."

"He fooled you at first?" asked Mr. Fontaine.

Reluctantly Woo Fang nodded. "Was not sure firs'. But when Woo Fang leave Fontaine house little while 'go, he followed by Highbinder, an' when Woo Fang came back he fin' sign of Highbinder on door. Poison bottle, rope an' knife, with note which say, gonna kill Woo Fang if he not quit try to fin' em'rald of Yee Chow. Huh! Woo Fang let Highbinder man follow him. Then he know man is not Duke Po-Tsia, 'cause duke not want to see Woo Fang die. Em'rald Hem'way fin' in butler's hand was not em'rald of Yee Chow. Woo Fang know Yee Chow em'rald; also, him know thees stone. Stone butler have b'long to Duke Po-Tsia!"

"You mean, neither stone is the emerald of Yee Chow?" spluttered Brattle.

"Heh? Yes!" droned Woo Fang.

"I thought there was but one emerald like this in the whole world?" reckoned the millionaire.

"Woo Fang did say, maybe," smiled the strange man. "Ah, but 'nother em'rald like thees owned by Manchu Dynasty, an' both em'rald same as like. Duke Po-Tsia bring Manchu em'rald to sell in 'merica. Paper say so." He contemplated the yellow man on the floor. "Huh, me guessed thees Highbinder man steal em'rald f'om duke; an' guess righ'; yes? Highbinder man, after him steal em'rald f'om duke, read in paper 'bout Brattle gonna has brought em'rald of Yee Chow f'om China, before stone was stolen f'om Brattle. Highbinder guess him gonna steal both stone, have lot money by sell both, an' go back to China to live rich for res' of life. Highbinder wise to Hong Ting Long man an' watch him. Know him b'long to Yee Chow, an' is gonna try to steal stone f'om Brattle. Highbinder say to himsel': 'Oh, me be hog; gonna get both stone while 'bout it.' So him hang 'roun'. Him trail Hong Ting Long man' an' when him come back here las' nigh' to get fake stone him hide in curtain—Highbinder come here, too.

"When Hong Ting Long man let into house by Anson, other man sneak in while Anson take Hong Ting Long man in other room. Highbinder wait in hall behin' door, where him drop thees holder f'om knife." Woo Fang paused, drawing the leather sheath to light, sniffing of it carefully. "Huh, when Woo Fang get rope, knife an' poison bottle, me smell of rope, then smell of knife-holder.

"Both same—both same! Thees mo'ning, when Woo Fang 'mos' ready, him smell of slipper fake duke leave behind." He bared his large, square teeth, slowly nodding. "Same, too. Duke not man who kill. Woo Fang start to fin' other man who gonna try to kill Woo Fang. Huh! Woo Fang lead him into trap!" he droned.

"But the murder?" breathed Brattle. "How——"

"Oh, murder? Mm! Thees Highbinder man come in room where butler an' Hong Ting Long man fight. Hong Ting Long man not have knife. Him was fighting with Graves for fake em'rald, which Yee Chow man think em'rald of Yee Chow. Al'eady Chin'man have fake em'rald in hand, after he grab f'om curtain. Graves had surprise' Yee Chow worshipper. Stone fall on floor. Highbinder, who run in, pick it up, draw knife, an' stab both. When him hear Anson outsi', him get 'fraid. Guess him not want take stone with him in case him get caught. Pull out of pocket an' put in Graves' hand, so p'lice think nobody else been there, an' two men kill each other. Then he stick knife in floor. Had cut wires 'fore him come in. Then he get out of window."

"Yes, and he——" uttered Mr. Fontaine eagerly.

"Ah," smiled Woo Fang, swaying to and fro. "Highbinder pull duke's em'rald—real stone—f'om pocket by mistake, an' put in Graves' hand. Him fin' out later him have wrong stone, yet think both worth much money, 'cause him not know truth. Not know Brattle's stone, without dye form'la, not worth an'theeng, an' that em'rald of Yee Chow still in shine—back in China!"

Before the fire-place, Brattle and Mr. Fontaine left Woo Fang, at the strange man's request. He wished to remain by himself till they took him back to New York. Alone, the implacable man seemed to nod, as of a drooping poppy, his deep-socketed eyes sheathed heavily, his thin lips parted in a contented smile. As he swayed to and fro, with the sleek Tee Tee staring wistfully up from his haunches, Woo Fang broke forth in his discordant humming. Swaying, swaying, ever swaying, with his thin, fan-like hands pressed across his concave breast, the stooping man hummed:

"Ho-le-lo-lum-le-lo-le."

A DANGEROUS GUEST

BY MARIE HARDEN GLOVER.

PART I.

"CONFOUND the Comte de Rocheville!" exclaimed Thorne, impatiently, throwing down the letter which he had just opened and read.

"With all my heart, dear boy!" returned Rochester, glancing up with an amused smile from his newspaper, his round face looking as bright and pleasant as the morning sun. "But who on earth is the Comte de Rocheville?"

They were seated at breakfast—Jack, a tall handsome young fellow of twenty-five, attired with careful elegance, and the other, a huge ungainly-looking man of about thirty, arrayed with characteristic regard for comfort, in a faded dressing gown of prodigious dimensions.

"That's just what I want to know!" said Thorne uneasily. "This is a letter from mother. She tells me they reached home a few days since, after their long rambles abroad, and brought with them the Comte de Rocheville."

"Oh! Where did they pick him up?"

"At Nice, of all places! He was staying at the same hotel; and, according to my mother's graphic account, it was entirely owing to his fearlessness and pluck that Edith did not perish in her bed on the night the place was burned down. It appears that she was overlooked in the panic, and was missed only when all hope of rescue seemed gone. But this precious count, hearing how matters stood, without a word rushed into the blazing building and after a terrific struggle with the smoke and flames returned, scorched and blackened beyond recognition, bearing Edith enveloped in a blanket, senseless but unharmed. I don't wish to rob him of a single leaf of his laurels, but I can't help feeling uneasy!"

"You've not seen the fellow yet!" observed Rochester, elevating his eyebrows in mild surprise and amusement.

"No; I know I have not; but I've heard enough about him. Since making his acquaintance my parents' letters have had but one refrain—the Count de Rocheville—his handsome face and form, the fascination and elegance of his manner and conversation, from the *mater;* his thoughtfulness, usefulness and charming amiability from the old gent; while Edith——"

"Oh, yes—while Edith?" echoed Rochester, satirically.

"Hang it, she has never yet mentioned his name. She's a thirty-second cousin of mine, you know."

"A dangerous sympton that?"

"Of course it is," assented Thorne, pacing the room in gloomy agitation. "The governor is such a generous, easy-going old gent that he never suspects anybody; while mother is as romantic as any school-girl, and a handle to one's name covers, to her eyes, a multitude of blemishes and makes everything *couleur de rose.* For all they know of this count's antecedents, he may be the most abominable adventurer in existence! I quite understand that they should feel grateful to the fellow, and all that sort of thing; but to allow him to dangle after them wherever they go while abroad and throw him in the way of a naturally romantic and impressionable girl was most injudicious. To bring him home with them and make him one of the family——"

"What—one of the family? Are they married already?" asked Rochester, looking as serious as the proverbial judge.

"Married!" cried Jack, aghast at the bare idea. "Good heavens, what are you talking about? Come—do be serious! I am awfully troubled and vexed at the advent of this count."

"Very likely. It is decidedly provoking and unpleasant to have one's nose put out of joint either physically or metaphorically," returned Rochester, in his good-naturedly satirical way. "The fact is, my dear boy, those good people at home have so petted and idolized you that it quite astonishes your serene highness that they should admire and make a fuss over anybody else. Really I can't see what cause you have for being so disquieted! It is true that Edith happens to be an heiress; but, for all you know to the contrary, the count may be the paragon of virtue they fancy him, and altogether a most desirable parti. He saved her life; and, if she loves him——"

"Loves him?" interjected Jack, abruptly.

"Yes, if she loves him, what then?"

"Why, then, I am the most miserable wretch alive; for I love her—how dearly and truly I never knew till now! Oh, Rochester, old fellow, I have been an awful fool! You know how they've spoiled me at home, gratifying my every whim and fancy and making my word law. With Edith it has been been the same. We were ever together as children, and loved each other as brother and sister—I ruling and domineering, she submitting and obeying with unquestioning compliance. I was always her hero, and received her homage as my due. As we grew up the relations between us remained the same; and, while she was always at my call, I never knew how much she was to me. But during her absence the truth has been dawning upon me; and now that another seeks to win her and she is lost to me, I awake to the bitter knowledge that I truly love her, and that she is all the world to me."

Rochester glanced at the handsome downcast face opposite to him, and thought how strange it was that this self-satisfied young fellow, who justly prided himself upon his imperturbable self-possession, should now be as tremulous and dejected as a love-sick school-boy.

"Come! Are we going to haul down our colors before a shot has been fired? Never!" Rochester exclaimed in deep tones, striking an attitude so comical that Jack was forced to smile. "You're taking too much for granted! Why not run down and reconnoiter? I'll be bound there's a hearty welcome awaiting you!"

"And you too, my dear old comforter! The old lady writes no end of civil things about you. She says you can work just as well there as here if work you must, and will take no refusal."

"I shall be delighted! I've been promising myself a few days' change, and I dare say I can arrange matters."

"What a good fellow you are, Rochester!" cried Jack impulsively, wringing his friend's hand, and feeling wonderfully relieved and hopeful, for experience had taught him that hopeless indeed was the difficulty which Rochester could not somehow or other get him out of.

A truer friend, a wiser counselor, a better fellow hardly breathed than this broad-shouldered, warm-hearted giant.

Years before he had been called to the bar; but, finding briefs far from numerous, he had drifted into the "great republic of letters," of which he was now a bright and prominent member. When, upon leaving college, Jack became an aspirant for legal fame, Rochester took him under his wing and shared his office with him.

PART II.

"Well, Rogers, how are you?" inquired Thorne of a rosy-cheeked, corpulent old man, attired in unpretentious livery, who came panting up to the two young men as they alighted that evening at the pretty little station of Singlemarch.

"Thank ye, Mr. Jack—'ceptin' a touch of the gout, I mustn't grumble," returned the old man, his small blue eyes twinkling with pleasure and simple admiration as he regarded Thorne's tall, graceful figure. "I'm pleased to see you lookin' so well, sir!" he added, touching his hat to Rochester.

"Thank you, Rogers! I'm not at all well; I'm very delicate!" returned that gentleman, with a deep-drawn sigh which sent the old man into a fit of convulsive laughter.

"What's become of Pansy?" demanded Jack, with a frown, on finding another horse in the dog-cart, instead of the favorite mare which he always used.

"Very sorry, sir," apologized Rogers, who was stowing away the luggage; "but, you see, she's out with Miss Edith and the count——"

"You observe their names are already coupled together!" said Thorne bitterly, turning to his friend. "At one time I should have found Edith here, delighted and impatient, awaiting my coming. Now she thinks so little about me that she takes the very horse she knows is kept for me."

"You see, sir," explained the old man, as they started off, "we didn't get your telegram until Miss Edith and the count——"

"Oh, confound the count!" growled Jack, impatiently.

"I agree with you!" returned Rogers, earnestly. "I don't like this furriner. Not that he isn't civil and smooth enough, but what with his quiet, soft-soapery way and his big eyes, which seem to fas'nate you like, he 'pears to get you under his thumb without you knowing it. Beggin' your pardon, sir, I think that's what he's doing with 'em all at the court yonder, and the fuss that's made of him is something awful!"

The old servant gossiped on with the privileged loquacity of old age; but eliciting nothing but brusque monosyllables in return from Thorne, who was absorbed in gloomy meditation and harassed by a host of jealous, anxious fears, he addressed himself to Rochester, whose ponderous form adorned the back seat, and found in him an indulgent and amused auditor.

The Thorne Mansion, whither they were driving, was situated in one of the most lovely parts of Hampshire. It stood, a grand old ivy-clad building with projecting mullioned windows and queer octagonal turrets, in the center of a richly wooded park in hollow ground encircled with hills.

Its owner, Robert Thorne, was a fine type of the middle-aged gentleman, and its mistress was a worthy consort for so good a man. Jack was their only child.

Edith Raynard, their third cousin, was left an orphan and consigned to their willing care when a little child, and she soon rivaled even Jack in their affection.

The elder Thorne and his wife were in the hall to meet the new arrivals.

"And where is Edith?" asked Jack, with well-feigned carelessness.

"I have had to scold her and the Comte de Rocheville," replied his mother, with a self-complacent smile. "They have been for a drive together, and only just returned. Now be quick and dress, for dinner is waiting."

"Dear, dear Jack! How pleased I am you've come!" cried Edith, as he and his friend entered the parlor a little later, hastening forward with both hands extended, her bright, animated face and sparkling eyes confirming her words. "It seems ages to me since I saw your dear old face.'"

"And to me an eternity," he replied, in a low, constrained tone, and with a forced smile. He took her hands in his and gazed with kindling eyes and violently beating heart into her upturned face. He observed at a glance how the short time which had elapsed since they parted had added grace and rounded elegance to her figure and increased the charm of her sweet, girlish features. A thrill of mingled pleasure and regret ran through him. A few months since he would have greeted her with boisterous brotherly freedom—rough, unceremonious hugs and kisses—or, if it pleased his will, with lofty condescension and indifference. Now her beauty dazzled him, and her voice, her very touch, agitated him strangely. He could not trust himself to speak, and without a word he bowed his head and kissed her gently and coldly. She looked up into his face in wondering surprise. There was something in his earnest eyes which startled her and made her fair cheeks flush crimson.

"This is a great pleasure, Mr. Rochester," she said, turning to that gentleman—"your visits to us poor country-folks are unfortunately so few and far between. By the by, we have been reading your last book, and find it simply delightful."

"Since that is so, my dear Miss Raynard, what more can I desire?" returned Rochester, with an awkward bow, beaming upon her with undisguised admiration.

"This, my dear count, is our son Jack," said Mrs. Thorne; "and this gentleman, Jack, is our esteemed friend, the Comte de Rocheville."

"An introduction seems scarcely necessary, for to me we seem old acquaintances—thanks to my mother's recent letters," said Jack, with an effort at politeness which ended in an unequivocal sneer. "I take this the first opportunity of expressing my admiration and grateful appreciation of your gallantry——"

"Desist, I beg of you!" cried the count, speaking with a slight accent and in a calm, musical tone. "It was really nothing. Beside, who would not risk a thousand dangers to rescue such a prize?" he added, with a bow and a glance at Edith, which made Jack long to punch his head.

During this colloquy Rochester examined the count in a leisurely, critical way, and a strange expression of mild perplexity stole over his face.

"Handsome—yes, a decidedly handsome, distinguished-looking individual this count," he mused—"tall and graceful, thin and wiry; a striking face, splendid eyes—could melt in love and flash in war, I should think; finely-modeled nose; firm, resolute jaw; complexion delicate and fair as any woman's, and uncommon and remarkable with that raven-black hair and mustache! Yes, a fascinating face, calm and well-controlled, but capable of the fiercest passions—a face once seen, not likely to be forgotten; yet it seems strangely familiar—dimly, distantly familiar—though different——"

Rochester was roused from his speculations by hearing his name pronounced, and found he was being introduced to the count.

"I'm charmed to make the acquaintance of so distinguished a *litterateur*, whose clever writings it has been my privilege to read lately and, needless to say, admire,"

said the count, in quiet, measured tones, extending his hand with charming suavity.

Rochester was saved the trouble of replying beyond a bow, for dinner was at that moment announced.

They were a merry little party. Jack, simulating a cheerfulness which he was far from feeling, joined in the conviviality, and made himself sufficiently agreeable to avoid remark. Strive as he would, however, he could not keep his eyes from wandering to Edith and the count, who were seated side by side. He jealously noted every glance and whisper that they exchanged, how her cheeks flushed when the foreigner addressed her, and how she listened to his brilliant conversation with sparkling eyes and unconsciously displayed admiration. The more he watched them, the more dejected he became.

It was a fair, balmy evening, and, dinner over, they all went onto the old moss-grown terrace. The moon had risen before they re-entered the house; but Edith and the count lingered behind.

"How lovely the night is!" she said, softly, as they sauntered up and down. "All nature seems hushed—'quiet as a nun rapt in adoration.'"

"What a beautiful simile!" he replied, dreamily. "This is a lovely spot! Were I an artist, I would paint this scene and call it 'Rest.' I have been very happy here, Miss Raynard—strangely happy and at rest," he added, in a low tone after a brief pause. "I have never understood the soul-stirring charm of your American word 'home' till now. I have always been a wanderer, with neither kith nor kin—often without a friend—a roving, homeless Bohemian, taking life as I found it and living only for the day. But I've caught a glimpse of Paradise—of a higher, better life. Can I ever be content with the old life again?" He shrugged his shoulders and sighed. "When I leave the calm and peace of this happy home amid the trees and hills, and return to the restless turmoil of the world—when I go away——"

He felt the little hand upon his arm tighten its grasp. He looked into her flushed face eagerly and wistfully, and what he saw there made his eyes gleam brilliantly and his heart beat high.

"Have you tired of us so soon that you speak of leaving us already?" she asked, with forced raillery.

"Tired of you, Miss Raynard? Oh, no—that is impossible!" he returned, in a quiet, unemotional manner, yet bending his eager face so close to hers that she felt his breath upon her cheek. They had stopped at a secluded spot and stood leaning over the balustrade.

"I count the very moments, and regret their fleeting. Oh, it were a thousand times better that we had never met!" he cried, with sudden passion. "Yet, like the dazzled moth, I have stayed fluttering round the alluring flame. Forgive me. I will go away——"

"But why? I—I don't understand!" she faltered, bewildered by his mysterious words.

"Because I love you," he whispered hoarsely, all his habitual calmness vanishing, and giving place to vehement passion and excitement. "You have bewitched me, enslaved me—I know not what. Your sweet angel's face haunts me waking or sleeping. I tremble at your coming; your voice, your touch, the very rustling of your dress thrills me as nothing has ever done before. I am mad—worse than mad—to tell you; but you must—you shall hear me, though you spurn me. I love you desperately, though my love is the greatest degradation I could offer you——"

"Oh, no—a thousand times no!" she exclaimed, wildly, distracted by a whirl of confused emotions. "I am unworthy of such love, but I love you more than I can tell."

He gazed at her in a dazed hesitating way, and then, as if moved by a sudden impulse, clasped her to him, and with a torrent of impassioned, incoherent terms of endearment, showered kisses upon her.

PART III.

"Poor dear boy! It's hard lines for him!" said Rochester to himself, after closing his door on Thorne, who had unbosomed himself in his usual impulsive way. "It's mighty provoking; for she's a charming girl, as gentle and good as she's beautiful. I'm afraid the youngster is quite out of the hunt; for, if ever woman loved a man, she loves this count; while he, undemonstrative and inscrutable as he is, worships her. By the look of her pretty face when they came in from the terrace I fancy they have settled it between them. My host and hostess evidently know little or nothing about him, and are blissfully ignorant of what is going on. The profound attention and respect they pay him are certainly amusing; and he has so completely won their warm grateful hearts that he evidently has it all his own way. An exceedingly pleasant gentlemanly fellow is the count—very superior to the ordinary run of his class, with their theatrical display and hollow sentiment! What an extraordinary face his is! Yet—yet——" Rochester paused, an expression of perplexity again came over his face; but, with a gesture of impatience, he put out the light and got into bed.

Long after the others were asleep the Count de Rocheville sat at the open window of his room busily thinking.

"The die is cast! It's a bold throw, full of danger!" he muttered. "But the stakes are high and worth the winning. Yet, if I fail—*sacre!* What has come over me? What have I to fear? No one suspects. Who could suspect here, far away from the world—my world, at least? I am safe here. She loves me—she is mine! I have put away the past, and the future is clear. With her as my wife—my wife——" He started and smiled at the words, and repeated them softly and tenderly as a maiden repeats her lover's name. They changed the nature of his reflections; and, when dawn broke, it found him still dreaming of the future awaiting him with Edith Raynard as his wife.

PART IV.

"A fine stroke that, Count! You're a very pretty player, I perceive!" remarked Rochester, who was lounging lazily in a rocking-chair at the open window of the billiard-room, enjoying his morning pipe after a late breakfast, and dividing his attention between the *Times* and the billiard-table, where the count, practicing, was displaying extraordinary skill. Mr. Thorne, accompanied by Jack, had driven off in the limousine some hours before to attend an important sale of polo horses; and, the ladies being occupied with their domestic duties, the two gentlemen were left to spend the morning as they chose.

"Yes, I play a fairly good game when in practice," acknowledged the count carelessly.

A silence ensued, broken only by the clicking of the ivory balls and the buzzing of the bees as they hovered about the flowers outside. The count glanced toward his companion, whose head and shoulders were concealed by the open newspaper, and wondered at his sudden silence. Rochester's attention had been arrested by a name in the newspaper. He sat staring at it with knitted brow, as though it were some difficult problem. Suddenly his brow cleared, and his small, keen eyes regarded the count's face searchingly.

"Solved at last, by jingo!" he muttered. "Here's a pretty kettle of fish!"

"You appear to be much interested, *mon ami*," remarked the count presently, with an amused smile. "Any news of importance?"

"No—nothing of general importance," replied Rochester, from behind the newspaper. "A particular item attracted my attention. By the bye, it may interest you, as it comes from Paris."

"From Paris, eh?" returned the count nonchalantly. "Another *coup d'etat*, I suppose, or a cold-blooded murder, or——"

"No—not exactly. It refers to a notorious forger and swindler."

The count started slightly, and, pausing in the act of taking aim with his cue, raised his head and directed an uneasy inquiring glance at Rochester.

"Do you know, count, that criminals with their clever ways have a great attraction for me, and afford, I find, a most instructive and interesting study," continued Thorne's friend, with a winning smile, as he smoothed out the newspaper upon his knees. "We knights of the pen are indebted to them for many a thrilling incident and ingenious plot. You have seen much of the world, and no doubt take a great interest in criminal matters—of course I mean as a study of human nature."

"That is so," returned the count quickly, smiling as he carefully chalked his cue. "But what's the news from Paris?"

"The news? Oh, yes—here it is!" said Rochester, carelessly. "The Paris correspondent writes—'It is rumored that Jules Rougeboit,'"—the count flinched, as though from a blow, but the next moment continued his practice, though with a trembling, erring hand—"'whose clever capture I related a few days since, has, in the face of the overwhelming evidence against him, confessed his complicity in the series of forgeries on one of the principal banking houses here. It will be remembered that the affair caused a great sensation at the time, and that it was conducted with such consummate skill and boldness as to defy detection for a considerable period. It is reported that Rougeboit has made a full confession, giving the names of his accomplices, at whose head was the notorious Andre Dalmais.'"

A half-stifled exclamation burst from the lips of the count. His face was ashy pale and quivering with evil passion. The cue dropped from his grasp, and, with tightly clenched hands and flashing eyes, he stood for a few moments quite motionless; then, with a startled, suspicious look at his companion, who, he found, had paused only to pull vigorously and composedly at his pipe, he picked up the fallen cue, and, with admirable self-command, sauntered to the mantel-piece and calmly lighted a cigarette.

"'At whose head was the notorious Andre Dalmais,'" pursued Rochester, reading leisurely, as he rocked to and fro, apparently quite unconscious of his auditor's mysterious perturbation. "'The authorities are exceedingly reticent regarding the matter, but it is believed that, thanks to Rougeboit, they have a clue to Dalmais' whereabouts. At all events, M. Lafaire, their most experienced and astute detective, has left for America, presumably upon his track.' That's all," concluded Rochester, rising abruptly and for the first time fixing his eyes upon the count.

"An every-day incident, *mon ami*," remarked the Frenchman, lightly, raising his eyebrows in mild surprise, and carelessly shaking off the ash of his cigarette.

"Yes, but it has a peculiar interest for me. I know this Andre Dalmais," returned Rochester, quietly, still gazing fixedly upon the count, who raised his eyes in a quick, searching glance, then dropped them again.

"A charming acquaintance, one would imagine!" he said, smiling.

"Oh, yes—charming enough, no doubt, till one found him out!" rejoined Rochester, as he paced leisurely up and down the room with both hands thrust into the pockets of his jacket. "The first time I saw him was when on his trial for the mysterious murder of a certain well-known infamous woman—a murder which, you will no doubt remember, was the talk of Paris for a time. I was acting as special correspondent in Paris for the New York *Herald* just then, and attended the trial from its commencement. Whether he was guilty of the crime I could never make up my mind; but I fancy not. However, thanks to his handsome person, his cool, insinuating manner, and the eloquence of a popular advocate, he was acquitted, only to be tried and convicted for a series of daring, ingenious frauds which his trial had brought to light. The fellow was bad and worthless beyond doubt; yet, somehow or other, he interested me strangely, and I learned much concerning him. He was a gentleman by birth and education; but squandering his small fortune in reckless extravagance, he had sunk lower and lower, from a gambler to heaven knows what. I've a wonderful memory for faces," resumed Rochester, after a brief pause, stopping abruptly before the count with a bland, innocent smile, but a hard, resolute look in his eyes—"I can see this Dalmais before me now."

The count met Rochester's penetrating gaze without flinching, and puffed the smoke calmly from his cigarette. The next moment he shifted uneasily, and would have turned away; but Rochester, with an insinuating smile, buttonholed and gently detained him.

"Yes—I can see this Dalmais before me now," he repeated. "But when I saw him last in Paris his hair was what our lady novelists call rich, sunny chestnut; and so was the fine beard that he wore then. His self-command was really extraordinary; but I remember that when agitated—say, by an awkward bit of evidence—he had an odd habit of resting his chin upon his hand and gently stroking his throat with his thumb and finger."

Rochester's eyes were fixed significantly upon the count's slender hand, which was performing the peculiar action he described. With a start the hand was dropped and clenched; but the Frenchman, though unusually pale and dangerous looking, lounged easily against the mantel-piece and blew composedly a cloud of smoke from a fresh cigarette with the air of a polite mildly amused listener.

"Depraved and reckless as this Dalmais had become," continued Rochester, as he thoughtfully reloaded his pipe, "his character was not without its good points. During his trial many were the romantic stories told about him, illustrative of his staunchness as a friend, his love of little children and of animals, his gentleness and open-handed generosity to the needy and distressed; and of course he was credited with being the hero of many an *affaire d'honneur*. It was said, I remember, that he carried a lifelong memento of one of these encounters in the shape of a bullet embedded just about there!"

With a quick movement the Yankee's powerful hand was upon the other's shoulder, pressing it firmly. An expression of acute pain passed over the count's face, but not a sound escaped his compressed lips.

"A thousand pardons, my dear fellow, if I hurt you!" said Rochester, with an air of great concern. "I touched a tender spot perhaps?"

The count did not reply, but went to the open window and thoughtfully looked out; while Rochester watched him curiously and attentively.

"You know this Andre Dalmais?" said the count, presently, in a quiet steady tone. "Do you think he is likely

to be caught—to allow himself to be caught—like a rat in a trap?"

"Decidedly not. Unless he has grown reckless and foolhardy, he, being warned in time, will get away as soon as he can—say, to-night—without arousing suspicion or causing a scene," replied Rochester, walking to the door.

"And you would not betray him, supposing, of course, you were in a position to do so?"

"I think not—out of consideration for my friend's piece of mind."

PART V.

When Edith retired to the seclusion of her room that night, she found abundant food for meditation. The fierceness of her passion for the Comte de Rocheville astonished and alarmed her. From their first meeting this melancholy, distinguished-looking man had powerfully impressed her romantic imagination, and so fascinated her that she seemed to know no will but his. He was noble, gentle and brave, she thought—worthy of a woman's love and trust. Yet why did grim uneasy doubts haunt her? He loved her passionately, she was sure; yet the knowledge brought her no gladness or pride, but filled her with a strange, shrinking dread. Her thoughts dwelt upon his wild, mysterious talk, his reticence concerning his past; and strive as she would, she could not suppress the vague suspicions which arose in her mind. Then she thought of his conduct that day—how worn and absent-minded he had looked—how he had obviously avoided her—how, when he wished her "Good night," he had retained her hand and looked into her face in a way that startled and perplexed her. Then one incident recurred to her with a startling significance which had not impressed her at the time. She remembered that after luncheon she had come upon him unawares in the library, reading a newspaper with painful eagerness; that, when she had playfully laid her hand upon his shoulder, he had started as though frightened, and turned a wild-looking white face toward her; and that, when she had picked up the paper, he had hurriedly snatched it from her hands. What was he reading? In her morbidly excited state of mind she could not rest. She must—she would see for herself! The next minute she had left her room and was creeping down the ghostly old staircase to the library, where she knew she would find the journal.

With a violent start, she stopped abruptly; for in the corner of the room she saw a man kneeling at the open safe. She would have shrieked, but her throbbing heart seemed to be suffocating her, and she stood watching the stealthy figure as if petrified with terror. Presently it arose, and the clear moonbeams streaming through the open window disclosed to her the face of the Comte de Rocheville.

"Victor!" she gasped. She would have seized his arm, but he recoiled from her. "Victor! Oh, what does this mean?"

He continued to look at her in the same stupefied, incredulous manner, as if he had not heard her. Then passing his hand across his face, he seemed to rouse himself as if for a great effort.

"You ask what it means!" he said, in a hoarse, hurried whisper, averting his face from her pleading eyes. "Look at that rifled safe! Does it not speak for itself!"

"I—I don't understand!" she exclaimed frantically. "Oh, if you love me——"

"Love you?" he echoed, in tones of passionate derision and scorn which contrasted strangely with the expression of agony on his white, quivering face. "You are credulous to a fault! I did not come here for love of you, or even your money, but for the security this quiet, unfrequented place afforded. It has served my purpose; but I am discovered, and you find me, the noble, immaculate Comte de Rocheville, the honored and much-feasted guest, robbing my host of the means of escape from the police, who knew me as Andre Ralmais, the notorious forger, swindler, and blackleg. Tell me—you are proud of your lover——"

He stopped suddenly, for without a word she fell to the ground and lay in the moonlight at his feet as still and pale as though she were dead. He sank down upon his knees at her side, and gazed at her in dazed, breathless awe. Guilty outcast though he was, he loved this pure girl desperately, and, as he knelt at her side, the mad, delusive hopes of security and freedom from the guilt and danger of the past, of a degenerate life with her as his wife, with which he had deluded himself, rose mockingly before him. With a sigh, he picked up tenderly and reverently the flower which had fallen from her hair; then, with a last lingering, yearning look, he rose, and, listening for a moment, passed stealthily through the open window, and was gone.

Edith did not appear at breakfast the next morning, and when Mrs. Thorne hastened to her room she found her feverish and exhausted. Greatly disquieted, Mrs. Thorne questioned her, and sobbing hysterically Edith related what had taken place. The good lady, who had immeasurable faith in her favorite guest, listened in astonishment and incredulity. But sure enough the count had disappeared in the night, and the safe was plundered in the manner Edith described; and when Rochester recounted his story all doubt was at an end. It was extremely humiliating and irritating to have been so shamefully deceived; but like sensible people the Thornes congratulated themselves on having got rid of such a dangerous guest so cheaply, and they judiciously hushed the matter up.

Edith soon recovered from the severe shock she had sustained and regained her usual health and spirits. Now that the excitement was over she knew that what she had thought was love was nothing but infatuation, and she trembled to think what disaster it might have brought upon her. But warm, steadfast love for Jack revived with increased fervor, and when he wooed her with unaccustomed gentleness and humility she gave him all he asked for.

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WHEN THE CRIMINAL RETURNED

By ORLEY E. GRAY

"THE majority of murderers are taken not because of any miscalculations in their plans or bungling work work in the execution of the deed itself, nor yet because they leave incriminating clues for shrewd detectives to ferret out, but because of their guilty consciences and the fact that they seemingly must, sooner or later, revisit the scenes of their crimes."

Sheldon Woodard threw the book, Gibaud's "Reports on the Apprehension of Murderers," into the far corner of the room, where it wedged behind the radiator and remained.

"All nonsense," he snarled. "My conscience doesn't trouble me any, and why must any one, unless he be a half-baked idiot not capable of taking care of himself in the first place, return to the scenes of his crime. And why should the mere fact of his returning to it assure his arrest. Absolute foolishness, I take it."

Thirty-six hours before, Sheldon Woodard had killed Hobe Laridon, prominent business man and, supposedly, close friend of Woodard. The deed had been done in the Laridon-Brownlee office at midnight; Woodard had rifled the safe and taken a few hundred dollars, not because he wanted the money but that a motive of robbery might appear.

Woodard had premeditated Laridon's death for years, and had consummated it in a blaze of white anger following those long years of smoldering hatred. And now that it was done, he felt no remorse but rather the satisfied feeling of a man who has a disagreeable and long-dreaded job off his hands. He had covered his tracks well, had appeared shocked at the news of his friend's untimely death, and had offered a large reward out of his own pocket for the apprehension of the murderer. As a result, he felt that there was absolutely no danger of suspicion being directed to himself.

He re-lived in imagination all the details of the killing and had just arrived at the point where he was assuring himself that he would not have to revisit the Laridon-Brownlee office again, soon, late, or ever, when he was startled by loud rapping at the outer door.

He hastily swept a pile of papers from the table and placed them in his pocket, and opened the door to find Sergeant Connigan standing on the threshold. He asked Connigan in, placed a chair for him, and offered him a cigar; but Connigan waved both the chair and cigar aside and entered at once into the object of his visit.

"You see, Woodard," he began, "we're needing a bit of help with this Laridon murder case, and, seeing that you were interested enough to offer a reward, we thought that you might be interested enough to go a bit farther and help in running the murderer down and earning your own reward."

"I shall be very much pleased to do anything that may help to apprehend poor Hobe's murderer," Woodard answered readily.

"You see," Connigan explained, "Laridon and Brownlee had been doing some work for the government. Well, we have reason to believe that a certain foreigner named Van Dorlandt may know something about the murder. He is now staying at a known address in Boston.

"The chief has a plan whereby some one unknown to Van Dorlandt may be able to persuade him to return to New York for a few days, during which time we hope to be able to get hold of him and try a little of the famous third degree. If we can once get him into the Laridon-Brownlee office, where everything has been left just as it was on the night of the murder, I am convinced that we can get a confession out of him. We thought that you might be persuaded to go to Boston with a message for Van Dorlandt. Will you go?"

"I will do anything which you think will help," Woodard replied, "but I thought that it was a burglary job and had been done by a safe-blower."

"So it looked at first," Connigan answered, "but such is evidently not the case; the robbery part was merely a blind to hide a larger motive of some kind. No matter how we arrived at that conclusion, we are certain that we are right. Now if you're willing to help, come along down to the office and the chief will give you full instructions. The sooner you get started, the more chance we have of succeeding in our plans."

Two hours later, Woodard was aboard a Boston-bound train communing with himself as he watched the racing landscape through half-closed eyes:

"How they came to suspect that robbery dodge beats me. I wonder if—but no, they can't suspect me else they wouldn't tell me their plans and ask my assistance. I certainly have them guessing. There is no reason why any one with good common sense should get caught. It's all in keeping a level head."

"Seemingly must, sooner or later, revisit the scenes of their crimes." The words drifted suddenly through his mind without cause, and startled him into further argument with himself. "Bah! Gibaud was an old imbecile; no one is compelled by an invisible something to revisit a place which he frantically wishes to forget. It is all sheer foolishness."

At a house in Boston he was shown into the presence of a well-dressed, much bewhiskered individual, who answered to the name of Van Dorlandt. Woodard gave a mystic sign which the chief had furnished him, and then told his host that it was required by the "high power" that he return to his old haunts in New York for a few days to await developments which might be of vast importance.

Van Dorlandt seemed somewhat perturbed at this information, and said something, almost under his breath, about supposing that he would have to obey, much as he disliked to return to New York.

Back in New York the following day, Woodard told Connigan and the chief of his success, and also reported that his man had seemed uneasy and rather loath to return to the city of the crime.

"As you have probably seen in the papers, Brownlee has decided to have the office building torn down next week," the chief said. "It seems that the partners had been planning to tear it down for some time and build a modern skyscraper in its place, and now Brownlee says that it is unbearable to use the office where his beloved partner was killed, and has decided to have it torn down at once. That is why we are in such a hurry to have this Van Dorlandt back here. We have left everything in the office just as it was on the night of the murder, and we feel that if we can get the real murderer there, we can give him suf-

ficient grilling to elicit a confession. We shall attempt it as soon as possible."

"Will you need me to help in getting him to the office?" Woodard asked casually.

"No, you have done your part. We shall know where to find him when he returns, which will be to-morrow."

That evening Woodard was restless and uneasy. They were going to tear the office down the coming week, and he had a strong desire to once more view the place where he had evened up old scores so satisfactorily. "Seemingly must, sooner or later, revisit the scenes of their crimes." No, it wasn't that he felt that he must revisit the office, for he well knew that he could resist the temptation for a week; after which the building would be torn down and the possibility of revisiting it removed. But the spirit of the perverse entered into his mind; he didn't believe that there was any danger in revisiting the scene of a former crime unless the criminal was known or strongly suspected. In his own case there would be no danger at all. He could enter by way of the fire-escape exactly as he had done on the night of the murder, stay as long as he wished, and depart by the same way he had come. To be sure there was nothing to be gained by such a visit, but then there would be a certain satisfaction in disproving Gibaud's theory, and it really would be painfully pleasant to see again the place where Laridon had lain with reddening shirt-front and glazing eyes.

And so it came that near midnight Woodard slipped into the dark alley behind the Laridon-Brownlee offices, arguing with himself that he should not enter the building, but that there was no danger in so doing. And all the while, he was edging his way along the wall closer to the fire-escape which led up to the office window.

Stealthily he climbed the iron stairway to a stone ledge along which he made his way to the office window. He was surprised to find the window standing open just as it had been on the night he had entered it to still the rage which was seething in his heart. But then there had been a light within where now was utter darkness. He slid over the window ledge and turned his flash-light on the spot where he had last seen Lariden. Horrors! The body still lay just where it had fallen. He had never thought that the authorities would dare to leave a dead body lie untouched all these days. His spine grew suddenly cold and he felt that he must get outside immediately. He turned quickly back to the window by which he had entered and was startled to find that it had closed since he climbed through. He grasped the sash and strove frantically to raise it, but it seemed to be firmly fastened down. He was standing in a cold sweat of fear, wondering what agency had closed the window and fastened it, when he heard a slight scraping movement behind him; he turned quickly and peered with straining eyes through the gloom—there was no doubt about it, the dead man was moving.

With a cry of abject terror, he snatched up a chair and smashed the glass of the window, preparatory to a leap to the ground three stories below, but ere he could carry out his plan the lights were suddenly snapped on and strong hands seized him and pulled him back into the center of the room. In the light, he saw that the dead man was gone, and that Connigan and the chief were standing before him, regarding him with eyes that smiled mockingly over the wicked looking revolvers which they were pointing at his head.

"Yes," Woodard screamed, "I killed him and am glad of it! But how did you know that I did it? And how did you know that I would return to-night?"

"'Seemingly the murderer must, sooner or later, return to the scene of his crime,'" Connigan quoted. "I read that marked paragraph in that excellent book which you had thrown behind the radiator in your room. I took it for granted that so eminent an authority as Gibaud knew whereof he spoke, and I figured that if we let it be generally known that the building was to be torn down the criminal would return soon.

"As for knowing that you would be here to-night," Connigan continued, as he snapped the handcuffs on Woodard's wrists, "we were watching the office every night, and it was Van Dorlandt that we were expecting to catch, but seemingly Gibaud is also right in saying that the guilty conscience is a large factor in the apprehension of murderers."

A sensational story by Police Captain Harley, entitled "A Dangerous Case," will appear in the next number.

TAKE NOTICE!

The feature stories that have been published in this magazine are well worth reading, if you have not already seen them. The list is as follows:

NO.	
1	THE EEL MAN, by Robert Carlton Brown
2	ZITANA OF MAISON ROUGE, by F. W. Doughty
3	THE MYSTERIOUS WEB, by Armstrong Perry
4	UNDER THE HYPNOTIC SPELL, by Dr. H. Enton
5	THE SILKEN SHEATH, by Crittenden Marriott
6	A FORTUNE TELLER'S SECRET, by Gladys Hall
7	THE MYSTIC EMBLEM, by Marie Coolidge Rask
8	THE CARDS OF FATE, by William Goode
9	MR. BACHELLER'S APARTMENTS, By William Hamilton Osborne
10	THE INNER WHEEL, by Octavius Roy Cohen
11	THE VOICE OF THE VALLEY, by Robert C. Brown
12	THE SIGN OF THE SEVEN SHARKS, by Charles F. Oursler
13	UNDER A MASK, by Crittenden Marriott
14	CASE 4,444, by Gladys Hall
15	AFTER A MILLION, by Police Captain Howard
16	SHADOWING THE BLUE TRIANGLE, by Charles F. Oursler
17	THE CASE OF CAPTAIN FORTESQUE, by R. Ingalls
18	THE BIRD-HEADED SPHINX, by Edith S. Tupper
19	A DOUBLE MYSTERY, by Dr. Harry Enton
20	THE MAGICIAN DETECTIVE, by C. F. Oursler
21	KING COBRA MYSTERY, by George Gilbert
22	THE HAUNTED CORRIDORS, by Wm. H. Osborne
23	NO MAN'S MAN, by Maxwell Smith
24	THE TREVOR PUZZLE, by T. C. Harbaugh
25	THE TRAIL OF ROSES, by Edmund Condon
26	THE HINDOO VANISHING CLUE, by Pauline C. Bouve.
27	WHO WAS GUILTY? by Beulah Poynter
28	THE EVIL EYE, by Chas. F. Oursler
29	THE THIRTEENTH DOOR, by Edith Sessions Tupper
30	THE GAME OF DETECTIVE CARE W, by L. Jerome
31	LAW-MAKER AND LAW-BREAKER, by Beulah Poynter
32	THE COUNTERFEIT HEIRESS, by Inspector John Harrigan
33	TRACKED TO CHINA, by Chief Roger O'Brien
34	AFTER THE GERMAN SPIES, by May Halsey Miller
35	THE CLUE IN THE BOX, by Alexander Douglas
36	TRAILED BY A FRENCH DETECTIVE, by Rene Renaud
37	A DROP OF INK, by Lieutenant Robert W. Warden
38	THE TEN DOCTORS, by Allan Arnold Fox
39	THE STAIN ON PAGE 61, by Chas. T. Jordan
40	A MASKED MYSTERY, by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41	THE BLACK SOUL, by Beulah Poynter.
42	SANCTUARY, by William Hamilton Osborne.
43	THE MYSTERY OF THE SEVEN SHADOWS, by Charles F. Oursler.
44	THE SIGN OF THE DRAGON, by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.

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MONSIEUR AND THE STOLEN BONDS

By DETECTIVE SERGEANT WILSON

THE agent of a rather eminent French house arrived one morning in great distress at the Central Office. He informed the chief that he had just sustained an almost ruinous loss in bonds, commercial bills of exchange, besides a considerable sum in money. He had, it appeared, been absent in Paris about a month, and on his return, but a few hours previously, discovered that his safe had been rifled. False keys must have been used, as the safe was found locked, and no sign of violence could be observed. He handed in full written details of the property carried off, the numbers of the bonds, and every other particular.

The first step taken was to ascertain if any of the bonds had been tendered for sale. Not one had been presented; payment was of course stopped, and advertisements descriptive of the bills of exchange, as well as of the bonds, were inserted in the evening and the following morning papers. A day or two afterwards, a considerable reward was offered for such information as might lead to the apprehension of the offenders. No result followed; and in spite of the active exertions of the officers employed, not the slightest clue could be obtained to the perpetrators of the robbery; the junior partner in the firm, M. Bellebon, in the meantime arrived in New York, to assist in the investigation, and was naturally extremely urgent in his inquiries; but the mystery which enveloped the affair remained impenetrable. At last a letter, bearing the St. Martin post-mark, was received by the agent, M. Alexandre le Breton, which contained an offer to surrender the whole of the plunder, with the exception of the cash, for the sum of five thousand dollars. The property which had been extracted was more than ten times that sum, and had been destined by the French house to meet some heavy liabilities falling due in New York very shortly. Le Breton had been ordered to pay the whole amount into his bank to the account of the firm, and had indeed been severely blamed for not having done so.

The letter went on to state that should the offer be acceded to, a mystically worded advertisement—of which a copy was inclosed—was to be inserted in the *Times*, and then a means would be suggested for safety—in the interest of the thieves of course—to carry the agreement into effect. M. Bellebon was half-inclined to close with this proposal, in order to save the credit of the house, which would be destroyed unless its acceptances, now due in about fourteen days, could be met. Without the stolen money and bills of exchange, this was, he feared, impossible. The chief, to whom M. Bellebon showed the letter, would not hear of compliance with such a demand, and threatened a prosecution for compounding a felony if M. Bellebon persisted in doing so. The advertisement was, however, inserted, and an immediate reply directed that Le Breton should present himself at the Old Manor-house, Yonkers, unattended, at four o'clock on the following afternoon, bringing with him of course the stipulated sum in gold. It was added that, to prevent any possible treason, Le Breton would find a note for him at the hotel, informing him of the spot—a solitary one and far away from any place where an ambush could be concealed—where the business would be concluded, and to which he must proceed unaccompanied, and on foot! This proposal was certainly quite as ingenious as it was cool, and the chances of outwitting such cunning rascals seemed exceedingly doubtful. A very tolerable scheme was, however, hit upon, and M. le Breton proceeded at the appointed hour to the Old Manor-house. No letter or message had been left for him, and nobody could be seen near or about the roadhouse.

On the following day another missive arrived, which stated that the writer was quite aware of the trick which the police had intended playing him, and he assured M. Bellebon that such a line of conduct was as unwise as it would be fruitless, inasmuch as if "good faith" was not observed, the securities and bonds would be destroyed, and the house of Bellebon & Company would be consequently exposed to bankruptcy.

Just at this crisis of the affair a detective named Jerry McBride arrived in town. "I have been wishing for your return, in order to intrust you with a tangled affair," said the chief. "You know French, too, which is fortunate; for the gentleman who has been plundered understands little or no English." He then related the foregoing particulars, with other apparently slight circumstances; and after a long conversation with him, McBride retired to think the matter over, and decide upon the likeliest mode of action.

After much cogitation he determined to see M. Bellebon alone, and for this purpose dispatched a waiter with a note expressive of his wish to see Bellebon instantly on pressing business. He was at home, and immediately acceded to the request. McBride introduced himself, and after about a quarter of an hour's conference, said carelessly:

"Is Monsieur le Breton at the office where the robbery was committed?"

"No; he has gone to Greenwich, Connecticut, on business, and will not return until late in the evening. But if you wish to re-examine the place I can, of course, enable you to do so."

"It will, I think, be advisable; and you will, if you please," he added, as they emerged into the street, "permit me to take you by the arm, in order that the official character of my visit may not be suspected by any one there."

Bellebon laughingly complied, and they arrived at the house arm-in-arm. They were admitted by an elderly woman; and there was a young man seated at a desk in an inner room, writing. He eyed McBride for a moment, but the officer gave him no opportunity for a distinct view of his features. The detective presently handed M. Bellebon a card, on which he had contrived to write, unobserved: "Send away the clerk." In answer to M. Bellebon's glance of inquiry, he merely said, "that, as he did not wish to be known there as a police officer, it was essential that the minute search he was about to make should be without witnesses." He agreed, and the woman was also sent away on a distant errand. Every conceivable place was ransacked; every scrap of paper that had writing on it was eagerly perused. At length the search was over, apparently without result.

"You are quite sure, Monsieur Bellebon, as you informed the chief, that Monsieur le Breton has no female relations or acquaintances in this country?"

"Positive," he replied. "I have made the most explicit inquiries on the subject, both of the clerk Dubarle and of the woman-servant."

Just then the clerk returned, out of breath with haste, and McBride took his leave, without even now affording the young gentleman so clear a view of his face as he was evidently anxious to obtain.

"No female acquaintance!" thought the detective, as he re-entered the private room of the hotel he had left an hour before. "From whom came, then, these scraps of perfumed note-paper I have found in his desk, I wonder?" He sat down and endeavored to piece them out, but after considerable trouble, satisfied himself that they were parts of different notes, and so small, unfortunately, as to contain nothing which separately afforded any information, except that they were all written by one hand, and that a female one.

About two hours after this McBride was sauntering along the street, when a small discolored printed handbill, lying in a haberdasher's shop-window, arrested his attention. It ran thus: "Ten dollars reward—Lost, an Italian greyhound. The tip of its tail has been chopped off, and it answers to the name of Fidele." Underneath, the reader was told in writing to "inquire within."

"Fidele!" mentally exclaimed the detective. "Any relation to M. le Breton's fair correspondent's Fidele, I wonder?" In a twinkling his pocket-book was out, and he reperused by the gas-light on one of the perfumed scraps of paper, the following portion of a sentence, "ma pauvre Fidele est per——" The bill, he observed, was dated nearly three weeks previously. He forthwith entered the shop, and pointing to the bill, said he knew a person who had found such a dog as was there advertised. The woman at the counter said she was glad to hear it, as the lady, formerly a customer of theirs, was much grieved at the animal's loss.

"What is the lady's name?" asked McBride.

"I can't rightly pronounce the name," was the reply. "It is French, I believe; but here it is, with the address, in the day-book, written by herself."

McBride eagerly read—"Madame Levasseur, Bridge street, Brooklyn." The handwriting greatly resembled that on the scraps McBride had taken from M. le Breton's desk; and the writer was French, too! Here were indications of a trail which might lead to unhoped-for success, and he determined to follow it up vigorously. After one or two other questions, he left the shop, promising to send the dog to the lady the next day. He then hastened to the West Side to the establishment of a well-known dog-fancier, and procured the loan, at a reasonable price, of an ugly Italian greyhound.

He arrived at that lady's residence about twelve o'clock on the following day, so thoroughly disguised that his own wife, when he entered the breakfast-room just previous to starting, screamed with alarm and surprise. The mistress of the house was at home, but indisposed, and the servant said she would take the dog to her, though, if McBride would take it out of the basket, she herself could tell him if it were Fidele or not. He replied that he would only show the dog to the lady, and would not trust it out of his hands. This message was carried upstairs, and after waiting some time outside, the detective was admitted, asked to wipe his shoes carefully, and walk up. Madame Levasseur, a showy-looking woman, though not over-refined in speech or manners, was seated on a sofa in vehement expectation of embracing her dear Fidele; but McBride's vagabond appearance so startled her that she screamed loudly for her husband, M. Levasseur. This gentleman, a fine, tall, whiskered, mustached person, hastened into the apartment half-shaved, and with his razor in his hand.

"Qu'est ce qu'il y a donc?" he demanded.

"Mais voyez cette horreur la," replied the lady, meaning McBride, not the dog, which he was slowly emancipating from the basket-kennel. The gentleman laughed; and reassured by the presence of her husband, Madame Levasseur's anxieties concentrated themselves upon the expected Fidele.

"Mais, mon Dieu!" she exclaimed again, as McBride displayed the aged beauty he had brought for her inspection, "why, that is not Fidele!"

"He must be, marm," he answered, with quite innocent surprise. The gentleman soon became impatient of his persistence, and hinted very intelligibly that he had a mind to hasten the officer's passage downstairs with the toe of his boot. Having made the best possible use of his eyes during the short interview, McBride scrambled up the dog and basket, and departed.

"No female relative or acquaintance, hasn't he?" was his exulting thought, as he gained the street. "And yet, if that is not M. le Breton's picture between those of the husband and wife, I am a boob, and a blind one." He no longer in the least doubted that he had struck a trail.

The same evening, about nine o'clock, M. Levasseur, expensively but withal snobbishly attired, left home, hailed a taxicab, and drove off rapidly toward New York, followed by a man as stylishly and snobbishly dressed, wigged, whispered, and mustached as himself. This swell was no other than McBride, as prettily metamorphosed and made up for the part he intended playing as heart could wish.

M. Levasseur alighted in New York and dismissed the taxi. The officer followed; and observing him enter a saloon, unhesitatingly did the same. It was a general rendezvous for foreign servants out of place. Valets, couriers, cooks, of many varieties of shade, nation and respectability, were assembled there, smoking, drinking and playing at an insufferably noisy game.

M. Levasseur was an intimate acquaintance of many there; and, somewhat to McBride's surprise, he found that he was a Swiss. His name was probably assumed. Nothing positive rewarded the officer's watchfulness that evening; but he felt quite sure Levasseur had come there with the expectation of meeting some one, as he did not play, and went away about half-past eleven o'clock with an obviously discontented air. The following night it was the same; but the next, who should peer into the room about half-past ten, and look cautiously round, but M. Alexandre le Breton. The instant the eyes of the friends met, Levasseur rose and went out. McBride hesitated to follow, lest such a movement might excite suspicion; and it was well he did not, as they both presently returned, and seated themselves close by his side. The anxious, haggard countenance of Le Breton—who had been privately pointed out to the detective by one of the force—struck him forcibly, especially in contrast with that of Levasseur, which wore only an expression of malignant and ferocious triumph, slightly dashed by temporary disappointment. Le Breton stayed but a short time; and the only whispered words McBride caught were: "He has, I fear, some suspicion."

The anxiety and impatience of M. Bellebon whilst this was going on became extreme, and he sent McBride note after note—the only mode of communication he would permit—expressive of his consternation at the near approach of the time when the engagements of his house would arrive at maturity, without anything having in the meantime been accomplished. The chief pitied him greatly, and after some thought and hesitation, resolved upon a new and bolder game. By affecting to drink a great deal, occasionally playing, and in other ways exhibiting a reckless, devil-may-care demeanor, he had striven to insinuate himself into the confidence and companionship of Levasseur. Once he, McBride could see, was startled by a casual hint he dropped to another person that he knew a sure and safe market for stopped bonds. The cautious Frenchman quickly subsided into his usual guarded reserve.

He evidently doubted McBride, and it was imperatively necessary to remove these doubts. This was at last effectually and cleverly done. One evening a rakish-looking man, who ostentatiously and repeatedly declared himself to be Mr. Trelawny, of Fifth avenue, and who was evidently three parts intoxicated, seated himself directly in front of Levasseur, and with much braggart impudence boasted of his money, at the same time displaying a pocketbook, which seemed pretty full of bonds. There were only a few persons present in the room, and they were at the other end. Levasseur noticed with considerable interest the look of greed and covetousness which McBride fixed on that same pocketbook. At length the stranger rose to depart. The detective also hurried up and slipped out after him, and was quietly and slyly followed by Levasseur.

After proceeding about a dozen paces McBride looked furtively about, but not behind; robbed Mr. Trelawny of his pocketbook, which he had placed in one of the tails of his coat, crossed over the street, and walked hurriedly away, still followed by Levasseur. He entered another saloon, strode into an empty back room, and was just in the act of examining the prize, when in stepped Levasseur. He looked triumphant as Lucifer, as he clapped McBride on the shoulder, and said in a low, exulting voice: "I saw that pretty trick, Williams, and can, if I like, arrest you!"

McBride's consternation was naturally extreme, and Levasseur laughed immensely at the terror he excited. "Soyez tranquille," he said, at last, at the same time ringing the bell; "I shall not hurt you." He ordered some wine, and after the waiter had fulfilled the order and left the room, said: "Those bonds of Mr. Trelawny's will, of course, be stopped in the morning, but I think I once heard you say you knew of a market for such articles?"

McBride hesitated, coyly unwilling to further commit himself. "Come, come," resumed Levasseur, in a still low but menacing tone, "no nonsense. I have you now; you are, in fact, entirely in my power; but be candid, and you are safe. Who is your friend?"

"He is not in town now," stammered the operative.

"Humbug! I have myself some bonds to change. There, now, we understand each other. What does he give, and how does he dispose of them?"

"He gives about a third generally, and gets rid of them abroad. They reach here through bona fide and innocent holders, and in that case the company that issues it is of course bound to pay."

"Is that the law also with respect to bills of exchange?"

"Yes, to be sure it is."

"And is amount of any consequence to your friend?"

"None, I believe, whatever."

"Well, then, you must introduce me to him."

"No, that I can't," hurriedly answered McBride. "He won't deal with strangers."

"You must, I tell you, or I will call an officer." Seemingly terrified by this threat, the detective muttered that his name was Samuel.

"And where does Samuel live?"

"That," McBride replied, "I cannot tell; but I know how to communicate with him."

Finally, it was settled by Levasseur that the detective should dine at his cottage the next day but one, and that he should arrange with Samuel to meet them there immediately afterwards. The bonds and bills he had to dispose of, McBride was to inform Samuel, amounted to nearly sixty thousand dollars, and he was promised a thousand for effecting the bargain.

"A thousand dollars, remember, Williams," said Levasseur as they parted; "or, if you deceive me, the penitentiary! You can prove nothing regarding me, whereas I could settle you offhand."

The chief and McBride had a long and rather anxious conference the next day. They agreed that, situated as the Frenchman's cottage was, in an open space away from any other building, it would not be advisable that any officer except McBride and the pretended Samuel should approach the place. They also agreed as to the probability of such clever rogues having so placed the bonds that they could be consumed or otherwise destroyed on the slightest alarm, and that the open arrest of Levasseur, and a search of his house, would in all likelihood prove fruitless. "There will be only two of them," said McBride, in reply to a remark of the chief as to the somewhat dangerous game he was risking with powerful and desperate men, "even should Le Breton be there; and surely Jackson and I, aided by the surprise and our pistols, will be too many for them." Little more was said, the chief wished them luck, and McBride sought out and instructed Jackson.

On setting out the next day to keep his appointment, the detective felt considerable anxiety. Levasseur might have discovered his vocation, and set this trap for his destruction. Yet that was hardly possible. At all events, whatever the danger, it was necessary to face it; and having cleaned and loaded his pistols with unusual care, and bade his wife a more than usually earnest farewell, he set off, determined to win the game.

He arrived in good time at Levasseur's cottage, and found his host in the highest possible spirits. Dinner was ready, he said, but it would be necessary to wait a few minutes for two friends he expected.

"Two friends!" exclaimed McBride, really startled. "You told me last evening there was to be only one, a Monsieur le Breton."

"True," rejoined Levasseur, carelessly; "but I had forgotten that another party as much interested as ourselves would like to be present, and invite himself, if I did not. But there will be enough for us all, never fear," he added, with a coarse laugh, "especially as Madame Levasseur does not dine with us."

At this moment a loud knock was heard. "Here they are," exclaimed Levasseur, and hastened out to meet them. McBride peeped through the blind, and to his great alarm saw that Le Breton was accompanied by the clerk Dubarle! His first impulse was to seize his guns and rush out of the house; but calmer thoughts soon succeeded, and the probability that a plan had been laid to entrap him recurred forcibly. Still, would the clerk recognize him? The situation was undoubtedly a critical one; but he was in for it, and must therefore brave the matter out in the best way he could.

Presently a conversation, carried on in a loud, menacing tone in the next room between Levasseur and the newcomers, arrested McBride's attention, and he softly approached the door to listen. Le Breton, he soon found, was but half a crook, and was extremely anxious that the property should not be disposed of till at least another effort had been made at negotiation. The others, now that a market for the bonds and securities had been obtained, were determined to avail themselves of it, and immediately leave the country. The almost agonized entreaties of Le Breton that they would not utterly ruin the house he had betrayed, were treated with scornful contempt, and he was at length silenced by their brutal menaces. Le Breton was a cousin of Madame Levasseur, whose husband had first pillaged him at play, and then suggested the crime which had been committed as the sole means of concealing the defalcations of which he, Levasseur, had been the occasion and promoter.

After a brief delay all three entered the dining-room, and a slight but significant start which the clerk Dubarle gave as Levasseur, with mock ceremony, introduced McBride, made his heart, as folks say, leap into his mouth. His half-formed suspicions seemed, however, to be dissi-

pated for the moment by the humorous account Levasseur gave him of the robbery of Mr. Trelawny, and they sat down to a very fine dinner.

The furtive looks of Dubarle, who had been only partially reassured, grew more and more inquisitive and earnest. Fortunately Levasseur was in rollicking spirits and humor, and did not heed the unquiet glances of the young man; and as for Le Breton, he took little notice of anybody. At last this terrible dinner was over, and the wine was pushed briskly around. McBride drank much more freely than usual, partly with a view to calm his nerves, and partly to avoid remark. It was nearly the time for Mr. Samuel's appearance, when Dubarle, after a scrutinizing and somewhat imperious look at McBride's face, said abruptly, "I think, Monsieur Williams, I have seen you somewhere before?"

"Very likely," replied the officer, with as much indifference as he could assume. "Many persons have seen me before—some of them once or twice too often."

"True!" exclaimed Levasseur with a shout. "Trelawny, for instance!"

"I should like to see monsieur with his wig off!" said the clerk with increasing insolence.

"Nonsense, Dubarle; you are a fool," exclaimed Levasseur; "and I will not have my good friend Williams insulted."

Dubarle did not persist, but it was plain enough that some dim remembrance of my features continued to haunt and perplex him, little as he had seen my face.

At length—and the relief was unspeakable—a knock at the outer door announced Samuel. All jumped up, and ran to the window. It was the fence, sure enough, and admirably Jackson had dressed and now looked the part. Levasseur went out, and in a minute or two returned, introducing him. Jackson could not suppress a start as he caught sight of the tall, mustached addition to the expected company; and although he turned it off well, it drove the German dialect, in which he had been practicing, completely out of his thoughts and speech, as he said: "You have more company than my friend Williams led me to expect?"

"A friend—one friend extra, Mr. Samuel," said Levasseur; "that is all. Come, sit down, let me help you to a glass of wine."

"Thanks," said Jackson.

A silence of a minute or two succeeded, and then Levasseur said: "You are of course prepared for business?"

"Yes—that is, if you are reasonable."

"Reasonable—the most reasonable men in the world," rejoined Levasseur with a loud laugh. "But, pray, where is the money you mean to pay us with?"

"If we agree, I will fetch it in half an hour. I do not carry big wads of money about with me into all companies," replied Jackson, with much readiness.

'Well, that's right enough; and now how much discount do you charge?"

"I will tell you when I see the securities."

Levasseur arose without another word and left the apartment. He was gone about ten minutes, and on his return, deliberately counted out the stolen bonds and bills of exchange. Jackson got up from his chair, peered close to them, and began noting down the amounts in his pocket-book. McBride also arose, and pretended to be looking at a picture by the fire-place. The moment was a nervous one, as the signal had been agreed upon, and could not now be changed or deferred. The clerk Dubarle also hastily rose, and eyed Jackson with flaming but indecisive looks. The examination of the securities was at length terminated, and Jackson began counting the bonds aloud—"One—two—three—four—FIVE!" As the signal word passed his lips, he threw himself upon Le Breton, who sat next to him; and at the same moment McBride passed one of his feet between Dubarle's, and with a dexterous twist hurled him violently on the floor; another instant and his grasp was on the throat of Levasseur, and a pistol at his ear. Before either of the crooks could recover from his surprise, or indeed perfectly comprehend what had happened, Levasseur and Le Breton were handcuffed, and resistance was out of the question. Young Dubarle was the next secured.

Levasseur, the instant that he recovered the use of his faculties, which the completeness and suddenness of the surprise and attack had paralyzed, yelled like a madman with rage and anger. The other two were calmer, and having at last thoroughly pinioned and secured them, and carefully gathered up the recovered plunder, the detectives left in triumph, letting themselves out. The woman-servant had gone off, doubtless to acquaint her mistress with the disastrous turn affairs had taken. No inquiry was made after either of them.

An hour afterwards the prisoners were securely locked up, and McBride hurried to acquaint M. Bellebon with the fortunate issue of the case. His exultation, it will be readily believed, was unbounded; and the officer left him busy with letters to the firm, and doubtless one to "cette chere et amiable Louise," announcing the joyful news.

The prisoners, after a brief trial, were convicted of felonious conspiracy, and were all sentenced to ten years' in Sing Sing. Le Breton's sentence, the judge told him, would have been longer but for the contrition he had exhibited shortly before his apprehension.

As Levasseur passed McBride on leaving the court, he exclaimed in French, and in a desperately savage tone: "I will repay you for this when I return, and that infernal Trelawny, too." McBride was too much accustomed to threats of this kind to be in any way moved by them, and he therefore contented himself by smiling, and a civil "Au revoir, allons!"

COLORED SIDEWALKS TO AVOID THE GLARE

IN the summertime, with few exceptions, we all dread to go out on the street at noontime because of the insufferable glare of the hot sun on the white concrete sidewalks. An Eastern amusement park was the first to adopt this method of eliminating so great a discomfort by painting the entire area of concrete flagging within its boundary a soft green, with a resultant effect both pleasing and restful to the eye. Flatbush avenue, Brooklyn, painted a lovely terra verde, would be a decided improvement to the city, and growing plants might even be arranged around hydrants and lampposts in order to make the tout ensemble more attractive. In Allentown, Pa., the lampost is a deified article of public beauty. It is topped with artistic frosted globes and surrounded by banks of foliage and flowers. Why shouldn't the city we live in be made more beautiful? Every boy who can handle a saw and a hammer should try to make window boxes for the front of his home. Geraniums and English ivy make the best fillers, but a 10-cent package of nasturtium seeds, if carefully planted and tended, will blossom forth in brilliant colors that will force into the background the shabbiest exterior or the most time-worn brick casement.

THE PURSUIT

By CHARLES L. CHAMBERS

THE reader need scarcely be told that although police officers delight to recount their successful exploits, they do, nevertheless, experience numerous disappointments. One especially I remember, of which the irritating recollection did not pass away for many weeks. I had been for some time in pursuit of a rather notorious rascal, young in years, and by marriage respectably connected. By an infamous abuse of the trust reposed in him by the firm who employed him he had contrived to possess himself of a large sum of money, with which he hoped to escape to Europe. The chase was hot after him; and spite of all his doublings and turnings, and the false scents adroitly thrown out by his confederates with a view to favor his escape, I at last fairly ran him to earth at Boston. I was not acquainted with his features; but in the description of his person furnished me there were certain indelible marks enumerated which, upon strict examination, could not fail to determine his identity. He purposed, I ascertained, to attempt leaving Boston in a bark bound for Liverpool, which was to sail on the day after I arrived there. Of this I was fully satisfied, and I determined to capture him on board. Accordingly, about half an hour before the ship was to sail, and after all the passengers had embarked, two of the local officers and I got into a boat which I had some time previously engaged to be in readiness, and put off to the vessel.

The sea dashed smartly at times over the boat, and the men pulled their caps well over their eyes, to shield themselves from the blinding spray.

We were speedily on board; and the captain, although much annoyed at the delay, paraded his motley passengers as well as his crew before us; but to my extreme surprise our bird was not amongst them! Every possible and impossible hiding-place was thoroughly but vainly searched; and we were at length compelled to a reluctant admission that the gentleman we were in quest of had not yet honored the captain of the *Columbia* with his patronage.

We sullenly returned into the boat; and the instant we did so, the anchor, already atrip, was brought home; the ship's bows fell rapidly off; her crowded canvas dilated and swelled in the spanking breeze, and she sprang swiftly off upon her course. It was a pretty and somewhat exciting spectacle; and I and my companions continued to watch the smartly handled vessel with much interest till a point of land hid her from our view. We then turned our faces towards Boston, from which, I was surprised to find, we were apparently as distant as ever. "The tide, let alone the wind, is dead against us!" growled the master of the boat, who was now pulling the near oar, in reply to a remark from one of the officers. This man had steered on going out. A quick suspicion flashed across me. "Where is the other boatman who came out with us?" I sharply demanded. The old seaman, instead of replying, turned himself half around toward the weather-bow oar, exclaiming: "Easy, Billy—easy; let her nose lay a little closer to the wind!" This, I readily saw, was done to conceal a momentary confusion, arising from the suddenness of my question. The fellow was an old man-of-war's man, with a face hardened and bronzed by service, weather, grog, and tobacco-smoke.

I repeated the question in a more peremptory tone. The veteran first deliberately squirted a mouthful of tobacco-juice over the side. Then, with an expression of his cast-iron face, which it is impossible to convey by words, replied: "That wor a passenger a-goin' there, I'm purty suspicious, for the benefit of his health." I looked at the officers and they at me. The impudent ingenuity of the trick that had been played us seemed scarcely credible. "He—he—ho—ho!" rumbled out of the tobacco-stifled throat of the old rogue. "If he wor somebody you wanted, it wor uncommon well done. Didn't you obsarve him jump into the main chains of the bark jist as you wor leavin' on her, and cast us off a minute afterwards? He perfarred stoppin' with us whilst you wor rummagin' the hooker."

It was useless bandying words with the fellow, and though I felt desperately savage, I had sense enough to hold my tongue. "Pull smartly," said one of the officers; "a shot will bring her to yet."

"Ay," rejoined the imperturbable seaman, "it mout; but I'm thinkin' we shall be a good while yet pullin' in against this choppin' wind and head sea."

And sure enough they were! More than another hour, by some boatmancraft unexplainable by me, were we in reaching the landing-place, and by that time all chance of compelling the return of the *Columbia* was long past.

It would be, I knew, impossible to prove complicity on the part of the owner of the boat with the escaped felon, and I preferred to digest the venom of my spleen in silence, rather than by a useless display of it to add to the chuckling delight of the old rascal.

We had passed some distance along the pier when one of the local officers addressed a young sailor, who, with folded arms and a short pipe in his mouth, was standing near. "I suppose there is no chance of the emigrant ship that sailed a while ago putting in at any other port along the coast?"

The man took the pipe from his mouth, regarded the questioner for a few moments with an expression of contemptuous curiosity, and bawled out, addressing himself to a weather-beaten seaman a few yards off: "I say, Tom Davis, here's a cop as wants to know the name of the port off the coast which the bark that sailed away a while agone is likely to bring up in; I'm not acquainted with it myself, or else I'd tell the gentleman."

The laugh from two or three by-standers which followed this sally greatly irritated the officer, and he would have indulged in an angry reply had not his more prudent comrade taken him by the arm and urged him away.

"Gee," said the veteran addressed as Davis, as we were passing him, "Jim there has always got plenty of jawing tackle aboard. It's likely to be blowing a sou'-wester before two hours are past, and then the *Columby*, if she hain't made a good offin', will be back again in a brace of shakes."

"Do you think it probable," I eagerly asked, "that the *Columbia* will be obliged to put back into Boston?"

"I don't know about probable. It's not so sure as death, but it's upon the cards for all that."

"Will it be early in the night, "think you, that she will run in, if at all?"

"Ah, there now, you wants to know too much," said the old seaman, turning on his heel. "All I can say is that if you find in an hour or so's' time that the wind has chopped round to the sou'west, blowin' the buttons off your coat, the *Columby* won't be far off."

The half-bantering prediction of the old seaman was confirmed by others whom we consulted, and measures for preventing our quarry from landing, and again giving us the slip, were at once discussed and resolved upon. We then separated, and I proceeded to the hotel at which I had put up, to get some dinner. I had not gone far when my eye fell upon two persons whose presence there surprised as well as somewhat grieved me. One was the young wife of the criminal on board the *Columbia*. I had seen her once in New York, and I knew that she was of respectable parentage. There was no exultation in the countenance. She had no doubt followed her husband to Boston for the purpose of furthering his escape, and now feared that the capricious elements would render all the ingenuity and boldness that had been brought into play, vain and profitless. She was a mild-looking, pretty woman, accompanied by a gray-haired man of grave, respectable exterior, whom I at once concluded to be her father. As I passed close by them he appeared about to address me, and I half paused to hear what he had to say; but his partly-formed purpose was not persisted in, and I proceeded on my way.

After dining I returned to the docks. The wind, as foretold, was blowing directly from the southwest, and during the short space of time I had been absent, had increased to a tempest. The wild sea was dashing with terrific violence against the coast, discernible only in the fast-darkening night by a line of white tumultuous foam and spray, which leaped and hissed against and over it.

"A dirty night coming on," said a subaltern officer of the port, whom I had previously spoken with; "the *Columbia* will, I think, be pretty sure to run back with the tide."

"When do you think is the very earliest hour she may be expected?"

"Let me see. It's now just upon the stroke of five; about eight o'clock, I should say, she will be here; certainly not before, perhaps much later; and if the captain is very obstinate, and prefers to incur a rather serious risk to returning, it may be not at all."

I thanked him, and as remaining on the bleak pier till eight o'clock was as useless as unpleasant, I retraced my steps towards the hotel, calling, on my way, on the port officers, and arranging that one of them should relieve me at ten o'clock. It had been previously agreed that we should keep an alternate watch during the night, of two hours each. I afterwards remembered that this arrangement was repeated, in a tone of voice incautiously loud, at the bar of a saloon, where they insisted on my taking a glass of 2.75 beer. There were, I should say, more than a dozen persons present at the time.

The fire was blazing brightly in the parlor of the hotel when I entered, and I had not been seated near it many minutes before I became exceedingly drowsy. I had not been in bed the previous night, and the blowing of the wind in my eyes for a couple of hours had of course added greatly to their heavy weariness. Habit had long enabled me to awake at any moment I had previousy determined on, so that I felt no anxiety as to oversleeping myself. Having pulled out my watch, I noticed that it was barely half-past five, wound it up, and placing it before me on the table, I settled myself comfortably in an arm-chair, and was soon sound asleep.

I awoke with a confused impression, not only that I had slept the time I had allotted myself, but that strangers were in the room and standing about me. I was mistaken in both particulars. There was no one in the parlor but myself, and on glancing at the watch I saw that it was but a quarter past six. I rose from the chair, stirred the fire, took two or three turns about the room, listened for a few minutes to the howling wind and driving rain which shook and beat against the casement, sat down again, and took up a newspaper which was lying on the table.

I had read for some time when the parlor-door opened, and who should walk in but the crook's wife and the elderly gentleman whom I had seen in the street. I at once concluded that they had sought me with reference to the fugitive on board the *Columbia*. The old man's rather elaborate apologies for intrusion over, and both of them seated on the side of the fireplace opposite to me, I waited with grave curiosity to hear what they might have to say.

An awkward silence ensued. The young woman's eyes, swollen with weeping, were bent upon the floor, and her entire aspect and demeanor exhibited extreme sorrow and dejection. I pitied her, so sad and gentle did she look. The old man appeared anxious and careworn, and for some time remained abstractedly gazing at the fire without speaking. I had a mind to avoid a painful and profitless interview, by abruptly retiring; and was just rising for the purpose when a fiercer tempest-blast than before, accompanied by the pattering of heavy rain-drops against the window-panes, caused me to hesitate at exposing myself unnecessarily to the rigor of such a night; and at the same moment the gray-haired man suddenly raised his eyes and regarded me with a fixed and grave scrutiny.

"There is no longer much doubt, I believe," he said after a few moments, in a business-like and sensible tone, "that the *Columbia* will be forced back again, and that the husband of this unhappy girl will consequently fall into the hands of the law. You appear surprised. My name, I should have mentioned, is Thompson; and be assured, sir, that when the real facts of this most unfortunate affair are brought to your knowledge, no one will more bitterly regret than yourself that this tempest and sudden change of wind should have flung back the prey both you and I believe had escaped upon these fatal shores."

"From your name, I presume you to be the father of this young woman."

"Yes," he said; "and the father-in-law of the innocent man you have hunted down with such untiring activity and zeal. But I do not blame you," he added, checking himself. "You have only done what you held to be your duty. But the ways of Providence are indeed inscrutable!"

A passionate burst of grief from the pale, weeping wife testified that, whatever might be the fugitive husband's offenses or crimes against society, he at least retained her affection and esteem.

"It is very unpleasant," I observed, "to discuss such a subject in the presence of relatives of an inculpated person. You must permit me to say that it appears to me you are either grossly deceived yourself or attempting for some purpose or other to impose upon my credulity."

"Neither, sir—neither," replied Mr. Thompson, with warmth. "I certainly am not deceived myself, and I should hope that my character will shield me from any suspicion of a desire to deceive others."

"I am not aware, Mr. Thompson, of your personal respectability; you may be unwittingly led astray. I very much regret to say that the evidence against your daughter's husband is overwhelming."

"The best, kindest of husbands!" broke in the sobbing wife; "the most injured, the most persecuted of men!"

"It is useless," said I, rising and seizing my hat, "to prolong this conversation. If he is innocent, he will no

doubt be acquitted; but as it is now close upon half-past seven o'clock, I must beg to take my leave."

"One moment, sir," said Mr. Thompson, hastily. "To be frank with you, it is entirely for the purpose of asking your advice, as an experienced person, that we are here. You have heard of this young man's father?"

"Joel Masters? Yes! A gambler, and otherwise disreputable person, and one of the most specious rascals, I am told, under the sun."

"You have correctly described him. You are not perhaps acquainted with his handwriting?"

"Yes, I am; partially so at least. I have a note in my pocket—here it is—addressed to me by the artful old scoundrel for the purpose of luring me from the right track after his son."

"Then please read this letter from him, dated Liverpool, where, it appears, he was yesterday to embark for America."

The letter Mr. Thompson placed in my hands startled me not a little. It was a circumstantial confession addressed by Joe Masters to his son, setting forth that he, the father, was alone guilty of the offense with which his son was charged, and authorizing him to make a full disclosure, should he fail in making his escape from the country. This was, I thought, an exceedingly cheap kind of generosity on the part of honest Joe, now that he had secured himself by flight from the hands of justice. This letter went on to state where a large amount of bank-notes, which the writer had been unable to change, would be found.

"This letter," said I, "is a very important one; but where is the envelope?"

Mr. Thompson searched his pocketbook; it was not there. "I must have dropped it," he exclaimed, "at my lodgings. Pray wait till I return. I am extremely anxious to convince you of this unfortunate young man's innocence. I will not be more than a few minutes absent." He then hurried out.

I looked at my watch; it wanted twenty-five minutes to eight. "I have but a few minutes to spare," I observed to the still grieving wife; "and as to the letter, you had better place it in the hands of the attorney for the defense."

"Ah, sir," sobbed the wife, raising her timid eyes towards me, "you do not believe us, or you would not be so eager to arrest my husband."

"Pardon me," I replied, "I have no right to doubt the truth of what you have told me; but my duty is a plain one, and must be performed."

"Tell me, frankly," cried the half-frantic woman, with a renewed burst of tears, "if, in your opinion, this evidence will save my husband? My father, I fear, deceives me—deceives himself with a vain hope."

I hesitated to express a very favorable opinion of the effect of a statement, obnoxious, as a few moments' reflection suggested, to so much suspicion. The wife quickly interpreted the meaning of my silence, and broke at once into a flood of hysterical tears. At last I said, abruptly, for my watch admonished me that fully ten minutes had been passed in this way, that I must summon the waiter and leave her.

"Go—go," she said, suddenly rallying, "since it must be so. I—I will follow."

I immediately left the house, hastened to the pier, and on arriving there strained my eyes seaward in search of the expected ship. A large bark, which very much resembled her, was, to my dismay, riding within the port, her sails furled, and everything made snug for the night. I ran to the landing-steps, near which two or three sailors were standing.

"What vessel is that?" I asked, pointing to the one which had excited my alarm.

"The *Columbia*," replied the man.

"The *Columbia!* Why, when did she arrive?"

"Some time ago. The clock chimed a quarter past eight as the captain and a few of the passengers came on shore."

"A quarter past eight! Why, it wants nearly half an hour to that now."

"Does it, though? Before you are ten minutes older you'll hear the clock strike nine!"

The man's words were followed by a mocking laugh close to my elbow; I turned sharply around, and for the first and last time in my life I felt an almost irresistible temptation to strike a woman. There stood the meek, dove-eyed, grief-stricken wife I had parted from but a few minutes before, gazing with brazen impudence in my face.

"Perhaps," said she, with another taunting laugh, "perhaps yours is New York time; or, which is probably more likely, watches sometimes sleep for an hour or so as well as their owners." She then skipped off.

"Are you a Mr. Walters?" queried a custom-house official who was parading the dock.

"Yes—and what then?"

"Only that a Mr. Joe Masters asked me to say to you that he was very much grieved that he could not return to finish the evening with you, as he and his son were unfortunately obliged to leave Boston immediately."

It would have been a real pleasure to have flung the speaker over the string-piece. By a great effort I denied myself the tempting luxury, and walked away in a fever of rage. Neither Joe Masters nor his son could afterwards be found, in spite of the unremitting efforts of myself and others, continued through several weeks. They both ultimately escaped to Europe; and some years afterwards I learned through an unexpected channel that the canting, specious old rascal was at length getting his deserts in prison. The son, the same informant assured me, had, through the persuasions and influence of his wife, turned over a new leaf, and was leading an honest and prosperous life in London.

WELLS FLOWED REFINED KEROSENE

NOT only coal oil but refined kerosene which may be burned in lamps is flowing from the mysterious oil wells at Ramsey, near Peterborough, England.

The oil was first discovered nearly two years ago rising to the top of water wells in that town. After a thousand gallons or so had been collected the flow diminished, but two or three gallons were gathered from the top of the water each day until lately.

On July 1 two of the wells showed a largely increased yield, which has continued. As the oil was refined it was thought at first that it had leaked from some tankage station, but this has been disproved by geologists, and the theory is accepted that by some freak of nature the oil is purified in the strata and then forced to the surface through the only openings available.

The vicinity of the find has not been drilled by the prospectors, who are now testing what are believed to be important oil fields in other parts of the kingdom.

STORIES OF GREAT DETECTIVES

BY A NEW YORK JOURNALIST

The writer has had occasion professionally to learn a great deal about the real detectives. He has talked with them, corresponded with them, heard the narrative of their lives and exploits, and enjoyed in reality all the interest and excitement connected with these men that is constantly presented in the fiction of the day.

For the benefit of the thousands of readers of "Mystery Magazine," we propose to relate some of our experiences, and give a rapid glance at the most noted men in the different cities of the United States. The number of professional detectives is now very large. They are employed in every branch of the United States Government; all the great cities have a trained force, and the private agencies are to be found in all the cities, with correspondents throughout the civilized world. Our "Stories of Great Detectives" give, perhaps, the first familiar relation ever attempted of the characteristics of the great detectives who have made the detection of crime a new science.

DETECTIVE SERGEANT THOMAS F. ADAMS.

WE had an interview with Detective Sergeant Adams at a very early hour one morning. He was so much "on the wing"—here to-day and in some other place to-morrow—that it was necessary to catch him when you could. He got out of his bed, and, as he rubbed his eyes to get awake, began in the most obliging manner to give us some particulars of his career.

The forty detective sergeants stationed at Police Headquarters were men of first-class ability in their profession. Inspector Byrnes would not tolerate a man about him who had not ability, or who was in any way indifferent to the work given into his charge. They were all alive to these facts, and spared no efforts to make a success in every case.

It is not going too far to say that Detective Adams was one of the best men on the force. He was then thirty-five years old. He was a sailor for many years, sailing to California, China, and India; then a keeper at Sing Sing prison, and had been on the police for over eleven years.

He was the inventor of a piece of ingenious cabinet-work used at Police Headquarters, which will hold two thousand photographs. It contains part of the "Rogues' Gallery."

He exhibited to us his own collection of photographs of criminals, which is extensive, and quite astonishing in the respectable appearance of some of the people, and the repulsiveness of others. His envelope system of records was an excellent thing. For many years back he had every printed fact about criminals or suspected persons. Those relating to each person were inclosed in an envelope, marked in bold letters with the name, etc., and then these envelopes were arranged in a series of drawers. Consequently, Detective Adams could at all times have the benefit of the public records of this kind which were kept, and of his own collection. He had charge of the public record and registry department for some time.

When a keeper at Sing Sing a desperate revolt occurred and he was shot at, but, with the assistance of other keepers, the convicts were subdued and taken to their cells. He was the deputy sheriff appointed to convey the prisoners from New York to this prison during the term of Sheriff O'Brien. He was a muscular and powerful man of the medium height, accustomed to the management of desperate men. Prisoners never trifled with him much—they knew better. At the same time he was a most kind-hearted man.

The morning we saw him he had just returned from Boston, where he had taken a prisoner.

The crook was a New York stock broker, who was charged with negotiating securities that had been stolen in a mysterious way from a safe in the Somers Street Safety Deposit Vaults in Boston. The amount of the bonds stolen amounted to $34,000.

Chief Adams, of Boston, gave notice of the robbery to Inspector Byrnes, and he detailed Detectives Adams and Haley to work up the case. It was a tedious task, but, nevertheless, it led to unexpected results. A tour of all the downtown brokerage offices was made, and it was determined to examine into all the transactions of a certain broker upon whom suspicion fell.

A great deal was found out that had a crooked appearance, although he was a man in good business standing. For some time he remained with his family at his summer residence on Long Island, where he had been watched by the detectives. While he was absent, word came that the $20,000 worth of stolen government four per cents had been purchased by a Philadelphia firm from a man with a full beard, whose description answered to that of the broker in every particular. When he again visited his home he was minus his beard.

About this time another robbery took place in Boston, and the detectives discovered that the broker had attempted to negotiate a bond stolen at this time.

Just as they had determined to arrest him he again mysteriously vanished. They had now obtained, by the most diligent investigation, all the facts about him, and had traced every transaction that he had made in stolen bonds. He was in ignorance of all this.

For nine days and nights the detectives watched his house in an up-town street on the west side of the city.

At last he was arrested, and at once taken to Police headquarters and locked up, charged with grand larceny and receiving stolen goods. In New York and Boston it was considered that this case was worked out with great perseverance and intelligence.

Detective Adams was enjoying his first good sleep after delivering this prisoner in Boston, when we caused him to be aroused for an interview. His good nature under the circumstances we could not help regarding as an evidence that his stern duties through so many years had in no manner destroyed the natural courtesy and obliging nature of the man.

Such are the stories about real detectives, which acquaintance with them enables us to relate. It will be seen that the statements as to their brave character and extraordinary exploits, as related in fiction, are fully substantiated in fact.

A DETECTIVE'S MISTAKE

A Serial Story

By GILBERT MACKEY

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE RING AGAIN

LITTLE did Andy Fenn dream that in entering that very restaurant he had started up a train of action that would prove of greater assistance to his imprisoned friend than if he had had half a million to spend in his defense.

Scarcely had the words left his lips, when the door of the Holly Tree Inn opened, and a flashily dressed young woman, of some twenty-four or five, entered the room.

Her dress was expensive and showy to the last degree, she fairly glistened with cheap jewelry, her cheeks seemed to glow with an excess of paint.

That she was no lady was easily to be seen.

She entered the restaurant boldly, and seated herself at a table just behind our friend.

At the same moment the girl Jennie appeared, bearing a plate containing a liberal cut of steak, delicately broiled.

These she set down before the tired boy with a smile.

"There," she said pleasantly, "you mustn't mind father; religion is his favorite theme, and he talks about it entirely too much. Try this steak, I think you'll find it better than the first."

"I'm sure I will," replied Andy, gallantly, "and I'm greatly obliged to you, miss, for your kind attention."

"It's nothing," replied Miss Jennie, eyeing the flashily dressed woman with a look of disgust.

She returned to her place behind the cashier's desk, and resumed her sewing, keeping her eyes fixed upon her work.

Andy tackled the coffee and steak, and found them excellent—as good as he could possibly ask.

He had almost finished his meal before the red-nosed Mr. Dorris reappeared.

Meanwhile, the woman at the table behind him had remained quietly seated without speaking a word.

The young girl showed no disposition to wait on her, nor had the woman spoken to her at all.

As the proprietor of the place entered his face seemed to undergo a change.

He glanced nervously at his daughter, and then approached the table at which the woman sat with a quick business-like air.

"Well, miss, what will you have?" he said, in a tone of voice unnecessarily loud.

"Two poached eggs and a cup of tea," answered the woman, in the same tone.

The man bent over her, pretending to arrange a clean napkin over the table-cloth, which was slightly soiled.

As he did so the woman bent her head slightly forward and in low tones whispered in his ear:

"He says to meet him at the old place to-night at nine. The trial of Al Constantine comes off to-morrow, and you'll be wanted again."

Seated as he was, with his back turned toward the pair, Andy could, of course, not see the motion made, but he plainly distinguished the words.

"The trial of Al Constantine!"

Over the boy's mind light flas' ed at once.

There had been something about this red-nosed innkeeper that had seemed familiar to him from the first.

The man had been one of the principal witnesses against his friend upon the occasion of the first trial.

Andy now recognized him.

He was the father of the girl that the unfortunate prisoner in the Tombs had loved, concerning whom the quarrel between himself and the murdered Gaylord had arisen.

This man Dorris had testified that he had refused his daughter's hand to young Constantine, and that he had bestowed it upon Edson Gaylord, with her consent.

He had further testified that upon the very day of the murder Al Constantine had come to him, raving like a madman, and in his presence had threatened Gaylord's life.

This testimony had made a powerful impression upon the minds of the jury, had been more damaging, in fact, than any that had been given.

All this Andy now remembered.

He wondered how he could have forgotten the face of this man ever for an instant.

So low had been the words spoken that they evidently had not reached the ears of Miss Jennie Dorris, still sewing at the cashier's desk.

As the restaurant-keeper hustled off to fill the order, evidently given only as a blind, Andy turned and examined the face of the woman with a careless air.

That she was a common person, vulgar to the last degree, was plainly to be seen.

Who was she?

Ponder as he would, he could not imagine what her interest could possibly be in the case of his friend.

Moreover, who was this mysterious individual who had intrusted a message to a witness in a murder trial to such a person as this?

Surely not a lawyer!

What prosecuting attorney could be imagined who would be guilty of a proceeding so irregular?

Who, then, could the sender of the message be?

Some one interested in the conviction of Al Constantine as the murderer of Edson Gaylord.

That was perfectly clear.

Firm in his belief of his friend's innocence of the terrible crime for which he was to-morrow for a second time to be tried, the interest of Andy Fenn in the singular turn affairs had taken was aroused at once.

He longed to speak to Jennie Dorris, make known his identity as the friend of the unfortunate man she had once felt an interest in, even though she might believe him guilty of the murder of her accepted lover now, and ask her what she knew of this woman.

Upon second thought, he saw plainly that this would never do.

He had nothing to do, nowhere to go. He would embark in the business of a detective upon his own account, and following this woman, learn who and what she was.

Could he render better service to his friend?

With this determination firmly fixed in his mind, he dawdled over the remnant of his meal, cutting his steak into infinitesimal mouthfuls, breaking his bread into crumbs, drinking his coffee in sips.

The woman's order was served meanwhile.

The red-nosed Mr. Dorris did not again address her by so much as a word. He made no allusion to her soul at all, he did not even offer her a tract to help digest the food. The woman ate her eggs deliberately, and washed them down with the tea.

Then arising, she approached the cashier's desk and quietly paid her check. As she passed the table where Andy Fenn still lingered, with one jeweled hand she slightly raised her dress to avoid its coming in contact with a portion of the first cup of coffee the restaurant-keeper had brought him, which had been spilled upon the floor by Miss Jennie as she had hastily taken it away.

In the light of the lamp which burned above the boy's head the flash of the many rings worn upon that hand now passed before his eyes. He glanced at the hand as it passed him, mentally considering whether those sparkling stones could indeed be the diamonds and rubies they seemed.

As he did so his eye fell upon one particular ring upon the middle finger of the woman's hand. This ring did not sparkle. It simply caught the light of the overhanging lamp and seemed to reflect it back into the boy's watchful eyes, a dull heavy blue. It was a *lapsis-lazuli*, cut in a most peculiar form. It was set in a ring of iron, which contrasted strangely with its more showy neighbors of glittering gold.

The heart of Andy Fenn came up into his mouth. Could he mistake that ring? No! In all the world there could be but one such ring as that. It was the antique iron seal of the Byzantine emperors of the East. It was the ancient family ring which had disappeared from the finger of Al Constantine upon the terrible night of the murder of Edson Gaylord in the taxi.

From that night until the present moment no trace of it had been found, although both Andy Fenn and Sim Scudder and Maurice Barrytown had searched and searched in vain.

How came it in the possession of such a woman as this? Clapping his hat upon the back of his head, Andy Fenn hurriedly paid his check, and followed the woman out into the street.

CHAPTER EIGHT

TRACKED THROUGH THE STREETS OF NEW YORK BY NIGHT.

As the woman who had thus in some mysterious way possessed herself of Al Constantine's antique ring emerged from the Holly Tree Inn, she first turned abruptly from Delancey street into the Bowery, and stood for a moment peering into the illuminated window of the pawnbroker's sale store upon the corner.

She seemed uncertain whether to go up or down. Upon leaving the restaurant, she had enveloped herself comfortably in a rubber cloak, and had raised a good-sized umbrella above her head, thus completely protecting herself from the storm. Andy Fenn, who followed close behind, inwardly wished he was half so well provided.

"Great Cæsar! how the rain does come down!" he muttered as he turned the collar of his thin summer coat up around his neck. "One would think it a second flood. Now, how am I going to get Al's ring from that female, I'd like to know? Poor show I've got to get anything from such as her in clothes like these."

He was right. Ladies of an adventurous sort have little respect for young men whose clothes betoken shallowness of pocket, if nothing more.

Nevertheless, he resolved that, if he followed this woman all night long, he would learn who and what she was, and ascertain, moreover, if it was a possible to do, who it was that had sent her to the man Dorris with that singular message he had heard her deliver. That message directed that the meeting between the two take place "at the old place at nine."

Perhaps the woman intended to be present, too. If so, Andy felt that he stood some chance of learning who this mysterious unknown that made himself so exceedingly busy in hunting up witnesses against Al Constantine might be. Possibly this might throw light on the real author of the crime, for never, even for an instant, would the loyal fellow allow himself to believe in the guilt of his friend.

His first inclination was to advance toward the woman, and boldly addressing her, demand to know by what means she had become possessed of that ring. Upon further reflection, however, he abandoned this idea. If the woman had paid no special attention to him in the Holly Tree Inn—and Andy felt that it was altogether unlikely that she had—he might follow her all night, if necessary, without exciting her suspicions for a moment, and thereby learn much that might be important to Al.

If he approached her abruptly there were ten chances against one of his obtaining the information he sought. He would follow her. He had struck a clue in this Gaylord murder mystery—he would work it to the end.

After a moment's hesitation the woman, gathering up her skirts with one hand and holding the umbrella with the other, hurried up the Bowery and walked slowly along the right-hand side of the street. She looked carelessly into the shop windows as she passed along with the crowd.

Whatever might be her destination, she was evidently in no hurry to reach it at all.

In spite of the rain the ever-present throng of persons moved up and down this most singular street in one unbroken stream. Many stared rudely at the woman as she passed along. It did not seem to disturb her equanimity in the least. No one paid the slightest attention to the poorly dressed youth who followed at a short distance behind.

Presently two gayly dressed young fellows came sauntering by, well protected from the storm. They caught sight of the girl just as she was crossing Houston street, by the elevated station, and coming to a sudden halt before her, blocked her path. Andy Fenn hurried on and took shelter in an adjoining doorway, where he could both see and hear without being himself observed.

"Ah, ha, Maggie!" said one of the young men lightly. "Pleasant evening for young ducks, ain't it?"

"Delightful!" replied the girl, with a familiar nod. Evidently she knew this man. Could he be the sender of the message to the Holly Tree Inn? Andy was inclined to think not—to regard him as a passing acquaintance of this female, nothing more. Nevertheless, he listened with attention to all that was said.

"Out for a little stroll?" said the man.

"Yes, a little walk by moonlight alone."

"Ha, ha! Pretty good for you. It's delightful on the street, to be sure, but better indoors. What do you say to joining myself and my friend at the theater a while?"

"I can't. I've got business on hand."

"Oh, no doubt! You're always full of business; but you work too hard, and need recreation. Better give yourself a night off, and join us at the play."

Here was a dilemma. If these persons entered a theater it would take all the money Andy had in the world to pay for a seat. But the woman did not seem so inclined. Shaking herself free from the young man, who had placed his hand upon her arm, she continued her way up the street. The men made no attempt to follow her, but walked laughingly away. Meanwhile Andy Fenn crept on over the dripping pavements, shadowing the woman as before.

Presently she crossed the Bowery, and turning into Bleecker street, walked leisurely toward Broadway. Here the surrounding buildings were dark and gloomy, and scarcely a dozen persons occupied the sidewalk beside themselves. Andy began to fear that he would be observed, for twice had the object of his attention turned and stared at him. Each time he avoided her gaze by turning his head away. At length he observed a bright light just ahead of him, which soon took the form of a transparent sign, projecting from an old, shabby brick dwelling out over the sidewalk itself:

MIDNIGHT MISSION

That was the way it read. The woman turned at the sign and hurriedly ascended the steps. For a moment the boy stood dumfounded. Had he then been mistaken in this person? Was she no criminal after all? If she actually belonged to that class, why had she refused an invitation to the theater to enter this place of nightly singing and prayer?

"I'm in for it," muttered the boy to himself. "I'm playing detective for this night only. Where my game leads me there I follow. Here goes for the gospel-shop. Maybe I'll find a chance to speak with her here."

He briskly ran up the steps and entered what had once been the parlor of the house. The room was filled with chairs, upon which sat people of all ages and conditions in life. Men and women, boys and girls, negroes and whites; some flashily dressed, and with countenances bearing evident marks of the dissipated lives they led; others shabby and ragged to a degree.

Nearly every vacant place was filled, but fortunately for Andy he now spied the object of his search among the crowd, and managed to find a seat just behind her chair. For the first time in weeks he felt himself thoroughly at home. Shabby as was his dress, he was a perfect Beau Brummel by the side of a dozen other ragged and seedy individuals who sat ranged about the room.

In the back parlor several well-dressed men were gathered, one of whom was addressing the visitors as the boy entered.

He was an elderly man, who bore the marks of a life of sorrow upon his furrowed face. Briefly he pointed out to his hearers the dangers of strong drink, and the inevitable end of the lives many among them led, and this without cant or hypocritical sniveling, but in tones of fatherly interest, which touched the heart of many who listened to his words.

"And there is hope for each and every one of you, my friends," he concluded. "For each and every one of you some place, some aim in life. But never hope to find it by sitting idly down and folding your hands, and wishing for the change to come. Work, work is the only way out of a life of poverty, shame and crime. Hard, earnest, determined work, strengthened by a sincere desire to begin life anew, to leave the load of sin behind.

"That which our hands find to do, dear friends, let us do it with all our might. Let us begin to-night and work, let us work and trust in God."

There was something in this man's words that bespoke not only a kind and sympathetic heart, but a deal of sound common sense as well. Far different was religious teaching such as this from the cheap hypocrisy of Andy's friend at the Holly Tree Inn, who, while cheating him out of the few pennies he possessed, piously inquired after the state of his soul.

Following this address a hymn was sung, accompanied by a young man upon the organ, and by the voices of many of the visitors, of whom Andy Fenn was one. Many times, in more prosperous days, had the boy worshipped in fashionable churches, but never in his life had he been so moved as by these few simple remarks in that humble room.

Still, interested though he was, he did not for a moment lose sight of the prime object he had in view. He kept his eye closely fixed on the woman during the entire time of the old man's address. With her head bowed upon the seat before her, as though engaged in meditation and prayer, she sat during the entire time.

Clearly a woman so devoted could not be very bad after all. Andy leaned forward slightly and took a good look at the many rings upon her hand. There had been no mistake. The ancient Byzantine seal of Al Constantine was among the rest. He lowered his head and tried to catch a glimpse of the woman's face.

To his great surprise he found that, instead of being deep in pious meditations and secret prayer, Mistress Mag was sound asleep. Here was a discovery! She had been wet, tired and cold like himself. She had come into this place simply to kill time and get out of the rain.

Down she fell in Andy's estimation as suddenly as she had risen before. He leaned back into his seat in disgust. Here was a sheer waste of time. Nothing could be accomplished in any such way as this. Still, as he had nothing but a cheap Bowery lodging-house in prospect, it mattered little how he spent his time.

The singing of the hymn seemed to arouse the woman. She lifted her head, shook herself slightly, looked at a watch which she pulled from her belt, and rose to go.

As she pushed her way through the crowd, many of whom, like herself, were now passing from the mission-room to the street, her eyes encountered those of Andy Fenn, and she favored him with a long stare.

"She's got on to me now," thought the boy; "she begins to wonder whether I'm following her or she's following me. I must be careful if I want to keep on her track."

Again he crept after the woman as she passed into the street, this time taking the precaution to cross to the opposite side of the way and keep well in the shadow of the adjoining buildings somewhat out of sight.

Raising her umbrella, for the rain still poured in torrents, the woman again bent her steps toward the Bowery, this time walking rapidly, and with the air of a person with some definite object in view. What was that object? Could it be to meet the mysterious dispatcher of messages to the red-nosed Mr. Dorris, the pious keeper of the Holly Tree Inn? Evidently not.

Andy glanced at a clock through the open door of a saloon—it was already after nine. And nine had been the hour mentioned.

Clearly this wandering female must be possessed of some other motive than this. The boy pressed closely behind her, determined to follow the adventure to the end.

The Bowery once reached, the woman boarded a down-town car. Andy leaped upon the front platform and took his stand by the motorman. Fortunately he still possessed

five cents—a street car ride was not beyond his means. Occasionally he turned his head and surveyed the woman through the glass which formed the upper half of the door of the car. As he did so, he each time observed that her eyes were fixed upon him. Was he shadowing this woman, or was the woman shadowing him?

Meanwhile the car bowled rapidly downtown until Canal street was reached. Here the bell rang and the woman alighted. Andy Fenn dropped off the front platform slyly and hid behind a pile of bricks heaped up before a new building in the course of construction, ready for the mason's use. Miss Mag crossed to the corner, where for a moment or two she stood beneath the elevated railroad, casting her eyes in every direction, as though searching for some person whom she expected to see. Andy had not the least doubt in the world that this person was any other than himself. He kept himself well concealed behind the pile of bricks.

"That's right, my lad!" he muttered. "Give me the cold shake if you can, but you'll find it hard work with Andy Fenn. He's up and dressed every time, and close behind you—make no mistake."

Again and again the woman looked up and down the street, peering into every doorway, searchingly regarding every face in the passing crowd.

Presently she turned, and half-running, half-walking, passed along the block toward Bayard street, and, with a sudden dive, skipped down a pair of basement steps and into an underground concert saloon of the lowest type.

An instant later a young man, without overcoat or umbrella, clad in a thin summer suit, with the rain dripping about his face from the broad brim of his hat of dirty what straw, paused before the steps of the saloon, which displayed, in flaring colors, the sign "Sailor's Return," and listening for a single moment to the wild notes of an old rattle-trap of a piano, which came floating up the cellar steps, turned suddenly, and followed the woman into the depths below.

It was Andy who had followed the woman into the "Sailors' Return," as will be readily understood. It was an underground concert saloon of the very worst description. Such places were common in New York.

They usually lurked in cellars along the lower Bowery, on the side streets, on Chatham street below the square; although some of them occupied the ground floors of large stores, and were bold and brazen as you pleased. Their entrances were ornamented with cheap handbills and posters setting forth the attraction of the place, with a paid shouter, who stood at the top of the cellar steps to draw in the passers-by. The "Sailors' Return" was one of these saloons of the cellar sort.

As Andy descended the steps slowly, wondering whether they would thrust him out into the street when they saw his poverty-stricken appearance and dripping clothes, a drunken sailor came reeling down the steps, dressed in the peculiar rig of the government service. The word "Powhattan" was embroidered upon his cap. Evidently he was some drunken seaman attached to a man-o'-war. He fell against Andy, almost knocking him headlong down the steps.

"Beg pardon, mate," stammered the sailor, steadying himself against the gayly painted sides of the cellar steps, which represented a blushing maiden with red cheeks, a blue dress and a green bonnet, welcoming a sailor with open arms. "I'm a trifle off to-night, d'ye see? Hope I didn't tread on your toes?"

"It's all right, friend," replied Andy, pushing ahead and opening the door. He was by no means anxious to get in a discussion with this man, nor did he care to engage in any conversation with him at all.

Like enough he would be robbed in the den before an hour was over, and thrown half-naked into the street. There would be a row, perhaps, and he would be called upon to take the man's part.

He knew well the dangerous character of the place he had entered—knew that it, in common with all of its class, had been established simply as a trap to catch the unwary drunkard—knew that they would rob a man of ten cents, if they thought they could get no more.

For a youth of his caliber the inmates of this place possessed no use at all. But the drunken sailor was otherwise inclined. Evidently he had made up his mind to fasten on to Andy, and claim him as a friend. He began to apologize most volubly for running against him upon the cellar steps.

More anxious than ever to get away from the fellow, Andy declining his most pressing invitations to have a drink, drew away to a quiet table in one corner of the room, and calling one of the dozen or more gayly-dressed and painted waiter-girls, ordered a simple glass of beer.

He cast his eye about the apartment. Upon one side was a bar, at the end of which, behind a little desk, sat a coarse, red-faced man in a checked shirt, and with an enormous black mustache of the horse-shoe pattern, taking in the cash. At the back of the room a dejected, seedy-looking individual thrummed a melancholy waltz upon a wretched tin-pan of a piano, with a cigar stuck in his mouth, a battered hat tilted upon the back of his head. To the music several women and fast-looking young boys were dancing—among them, also, several drunken sailors, besides Andy's new acquaintance of the Powhattan.

Around the center of the room were scattered tables and chairs. At the tables a number of persons of both sexes sat, smoking and drinking, their wants being supplied by female waiters, who moved between them and the bar. Among these latter sat the woman whom Andy had followed into the place. Her back was turned toward him, and it was evident that she was unaware of his presence. She was engaged in an animated conversation, in low tones, with a man.

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STRANGE EXPERIENCES

QUEER NOISES

I LIVE in a small apartment building out in the suburbs of Chicago. At exactly 12:30 each night I hear a strange noise coming from each corner of my room. I do not know whether it is merely my imagination or an actual occurrence, but just the same it always happens at exactly the same hour every night.

Our portieres are so fixed that when an automobile passes, its reflection on the wall gives a ghostly appearance.

—E. C. O.

WARNED BY A DREAM

IF anybody has had a stranger experience than this I would like to know about it.

One night I dreamed that I was crossing the street which I regularly traversed on my way to work. As I halted an instant on the curb an old man with a long white beard seized my wrist. He pointed out into the street and I saw myself lying in a roadway, badly injured and covered with blood. Then I woke up.

On my way to work that morning I came to that curb, but, strange as it may sound, had forgotten all about the dream. I was about to cross when suddenly I saw, standing beside me, the identical old man whom I had seen in my dreams. I was shocked for the moment and determined to wait before crossing the street. Of a sudden, without any warning, there dashed around the curb a runaway automobile. If I had been standing in the street I am certain I could not have gotten out of the way in time. I regard my dream as a direct warning which saved me from a horrible fate. Can any reader of MYSTERY MAGAZINE tell me how to explain this? Yours very truly,

W. J. DOUGHERTY.

A FREAK PICTURE

MY strangest experience was as follows: I am an amateur photographer. One day I bought a box of 4x5 plates, went in an empty dark closet, opened the box and took out two instantaneous plates, which I loaded into the holder. There was nobody in the dark room with me and the only light came from a ruby lamp. Having slipped the plate-holder into the rear of the camera, I went out in the street and met a young lady acquaintance who had a pretty little Italian greyhound on her front porch. She asked me to photograph it, and as she was also an amateur snapshotter, she asked me to take her in the dark-room to develop the plate. I was careful to get a good picture of her dog, and we went back to my dark-room, where the plate was taken from the holder and put into the developing solution. The picture of her dog came up all right on the negative, but to our astonishment there was the picture of another larger Newfoundland dog, faint and shadowy, lying down on the porch-step just below the greyhound. We were both certain that no other dog was on the steps when I took the picture. The mystery is how the second dog got in the picture. The only way we could account for it was that the plate had been exposed on a dog by some one at the factory, never was developed, and was packed in the dozen I bought. A spiritualist might think the big Newfoundland was a spirit dog. Anyway, it's a freak picture, and it has aroused a great deal of comment from all who have seen it. Yours truly,

—W. de W. G.

A PALMIST'S PROPHECY

I ONCE had my fortune told by a gypsy palmist. She said among other things that I was likely to die by accident on the 24th of June, which happened to be my twentieth birthday. Now I knew that there is an odd fatality about the majority of people dying around the date of their birthdays, and although I am not superstitious, I must admit that the prophecy made me feel uneasy. Indeed, I found myself getting more nervous as my twentieth birthday drew nearer, and when the fatal date finally arrived, I was so ill from auto-suggestion that I was upon the brink of nervous prostration. It was a wet, gloomy day, and although I had important business to attend to at my office, I absolutely refused to leave home. I stuck close to my mother all day. She did not know what caused my worry and anxiety, but attributed it to over-work. Never did a day seem longer, and when night fell without anything happening to me, my courage revived and I began to reproach myself as a credulous coward. At seven o'clock my father came home from business and rushed in, pale and trembling. The moment he saw me, he stopped, gaped and suddenly burst into tears.

"What is the matter with you?" my mother asked him.

"Here—read this!" he answered, handing her the evening paper. On the front page there was an account of a fire that gutted the place I worked in. It broke out at three o'clock in the afternoon, and half a dozen girls and two men were lost in the blaze. My father, thinking I had gone to work, had been searching the ruins for my body, as I was reported missing. Imagine his relief when he got home to break the terrible news that I was probably dead, to find me alive and uninjured. How that gypsy fortune-teller ever happened to hit the truth so accurately is beyond my comprehension. All I can say about it is that I've been converted to psychology and shall never disregard a warning of what may happen in the future, even if the majority of people scoff at such things.

—GRACE W. SHELTON.

SPOOKS

IN the generally accepted sense of the term, this is not a "ghost story," because even now I place no faith in spiritual manifestations of that character, and have always attributed them to the workings of an overimaginative mind. In this instance I would be quite willing to believe that my mind was in such a state but for one fact which I shall later point out.

It was at Newtonville, N. Y. I was one of a company

of farmerettes which was lodged in an immense old house, formerly the home of a Shaker settlement. Everything about the place tended to inspire spook stories. The rooms were immense, and the only light at night came from the dim lanterns we carried. One of the chief forms of recreation in the evening was to listen to stories about ghosts of certain members of the Shaker family who still haunted the place.

On this particular night I went to retire at about nine, as usual. I mounted the stairs, carrying my lantern, and prepared to retire. My bed was at one end of an immense room, and my room-mate had a bed at the other extreme end. We put out the lanterns and got into bed. I fell asleep, but awoke with a start after about five minutes. A figure in white was moving slowly down the length of the room. Hoping it might be my companion I called to her. She replied. "Are you in bed?" I asked. "Yes," she answered. I said nothing more. The figure continued to move, but I closed my eyes. I hardly slept at all during the night, but I would not open my eyes.

Next morning on arising, my companion said: "I'll not sleep in this room another night. I saw a ghost in here last night!" Could it be that my high state of imagination had been communicated to her? —H. G.

A DEAD MAN'S SHADOW

I DO not believe anybody ever had a more uncanny experience than the one that happened to one of my patients, who, for obvious reasons, does not wish to have his name mentioned. Mr. D—— had been ill with typhoid fever, pulled through the crisis safely and was convalescent, but was confined to his bed. At eight o'clock at night I stepped into his darkened bed-room to spend a few minutes cheering him up. All the shades were pulled down, the windows were closed and there was a low-turned night lamp standing on the bureau. Mr. D—— was sitting up in bed, glaring at me like a madman. I thought his fever had returned and made him delirious, but he pointed at the white wall beside his bed, and told me in husky tones to look. I turned and was greatly amazed to see the shadow of a man's profile on the wall upside-down. It was not my shadow, nor was it the invalid's, for we were both stout, and while I wear a beard he had a mustache. We were both bare-headed, but the shadow wore a hat, and the man was short, thin and clean-shaven, with an angular profile. I looked around to see if the lamp was casting the shadow from some inanimate object in human form, but there was nothing in the room but ourselves, the bed, bureau, one chair in a corner, and a few pictures on the wall. There was nothing to cast a shadow. I was puzzled and glanced at the shades, but could not see that they admitted any light from the street except in one there was a tiny round hole through which gleamed a point of intense light.

"It looks like Melville Hardy," gasped the invalid. The man he alluded to had died a week previously of influenza. He was a confirmed Swedenborgian and had once asserted, in my presence, that to prove that the dead could materialize and revisit the earth, he would come back to me some day. It so happened, however, that I am hard-headed enough to doubt such a theory. Consequently I did not permit any foolish superstition to warp my judgment. When I turned back from my examination of the window shades the dead man's shadow was gone. Mr. D—— was terrified, but I allayed his fears by saying: "Nothing unnatural about that. There's a hole in one of those shades about as big around as a bird-shot, and by peeping through it I saw an electric street lamp behind it. If a man's body intervened between the arc-light and that hole in the shade, the hole would act like the lens of a camera, and the electric light would project the man's figure through the hole and show the shadow upside-down on the wall opposite."

My theory on optics led me to make an investigation next day, and I met an acquaintance who bore some resemblance to Melville Hardy, and asked if he had been anywhere near Mr. D——'s house recently. He then admitted that at eight o'clock on the previous night he had gone up on Mr. D——'s piazza with the intention of inquiring about the patient's health, and said he stood listening before one of the shaded windows to ascertain if any of the family of the ill man were stirring in the room. As all was quiet, he had quietly gone away. And from this it may be inferred that my theory about the shadow must have been the correct one.

—JOHN RANDOLPH WEEKS, M.D.

SOME ECCENTRIC MEN

IN Vienna there lived a wealthy man, a Pole of noble origin, occupying sumptuous apartments in the heart of the capital's fashionable quarter, who, when he wished to summon his servants, did so by means of bugle calls.

The Viennese asserted that while he spent a fortune each year upon his raiment yet he was never clad in any save the discarded garments of his valet. On one occasion the Pole astounded the guests at a ball by appearing in a costume of pure white, with the notable exceptions of shirt and tie, which were entirely black. To complete the oddities, it may be added that when dining, which he invariably did alone at a table d'hote, he maintained his reputation for crankiness by reversing the usual order of things and beginning his meal with a demitasse, working backward to the soup.

It was not long ago that there died in an eastern town a wealthy eccentric who, though he had never for years been outside the grounds surrounding his residence, was accustomed to boast each day that he had walked to certain towns, generally at a great distance from his house. What he actually did was this: Whenever he decided that it would be an excellent idea to visit a distant town, he ascertained its exact distance from his home and covered it on foot on a carefully measured walking track maintained on his premises for this purpose. Should he desire to call on his friends near by he would do so by proxy, at the same time conducting a conversation with them by means of the servants, whom he sent in relays with certain questions, with strict injunctions to bring the answers as speedily as possible.

Among the wealthy eccentrics of England was a man who lived near Hastings. His fad excited much attention and amusement among his neighbors. Punctually at noon each day he would appear in his front yard, with a crimson turban on his head, his feet covered with richly embroidered and jeweled sandals, and with a coolie cloth around his waist. Then, absolutely indifferent to the hoots of the people in the street, he would first pray aloud to the sun, "the father of light and good," and immediately afterward prostrate himself before a quaint miniature temple wherein was enshrined a grotesque idol with diamond eyes. What made his eccentricity remarkable was the fact that he was not of eastern origin, nor had he ever been converted to any religious faith or cult of the East.

CURRENT NEWS

PAVEMENTS HOTTER THAN AIR

In hot weather the sidewalks absorb and retain an immense amount of heat. We all know this from experience, but it is interesting to know just how hot the pavement gets. G. E. Eaton gives in the *Engineering News-Record* the records made with a thermometer in Chicago, at a suburb of Cricago on two hot days last August.

He found asphalt registered a maximum of 124 degrees F; brick, 118 degrees F. and concrete 114 degrees F. From 11 a. m. to 6:30 p. m. these three types of pavement averaged, respectively, 118, 113, and 108 degrees.

Mr. Eaton also tested the air between 1 foot and 4 feet above these pavements and found that it was from 3½ to 4½ degrees higher than over a lawn in the sun.

CROWS PERISHED MYSTERIOUSLY

Six black crows, full grown and exceedingly gloomy of mien, who have long robbed birds' nests, picked corn, pecked carrion, guggled fruit and otherwise lived their alloted lives, perished miserably on the banks of Tupper Creep, near Westfield, N. Y., and no one knows what ailed them. When found two were dead, four were in throes and two of these died in an agony of flapping wings and distended bills. The other two were so clearly in the last gasp that their lives were mercifully ended by bullets.

No one knows the cause of their trouble. They were not emaciated, nor were they wounded. It was thought that possibly they had been poisoned. Some trees have been sprinkled with insect-killing mixtures, and the crows may have swallowed the insect poison.

One surmise is that the crows were shocked by the terrific lightning of one of the recent storms.

Still another guess is that they perished in a crow epidemic. It is known that rabbits, grouse, marten and other wild life are subject to epidemics.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN FIRST U. S. DIPLOMAT

The first diplomat to represent the United States at a foreign court was Benjamin Franklin, who arrived in Paris as official "agent" of the infant republic in France 142 years ago. The crossing of the Atlantic in the sloop *Reprisal* had occupied over a month, and Dr. Franklin had had many thrilling escapes from pursuing British vessels. Franklin was given a cordial reception in France, although his refusal to wear a sword or wig when presented at court shocked the fashionables. The greatest writers and philosophers of that golden age in France delighted to honor Dr. Franklin, and even the venerable Voltaire paid tribute to the genius of the American. Franklin remained in France nine years. At first he was merely the agent of "the American rebels," and had no official diplomatic standing, but even in that capacity he had sufficient influence to bring about the treaty of alliance between France and the colonies, which had so profound a moral effect on the Revolutionary struggle. He raised a large amount of money in France, and after the signing of the treaty became the first American Minister to that country.

HIGHEST DWELLING HOUSE IN THE WORLD

"The loftiest habitation in the world is in Peru," writes Isaiah Bowman in *The Andes* of Southern Peru, published by the American Geographical Society. "Between Antabamba and Cotahuasi occur the highest passes in the Maritime Cordillera. We crossed at 17,400 feet and 300 feet lower is the last outpost of the Indian shepherds. The snowline, very steeply canted away from the sun, is between 17,700 and 17,600 feet. At frequent intervals during the three months of winter snowfalls during the night and terrific hailstorms in the late afternoon drive both shepherds and flocks to the shelter of leeward slopes or steep canyon walls. At our six camps, between 16,000 and 17,200 feet, in September, 1911, the minimum temperature ranged from 4 degrees to 20 degrees F.

"The thatched stone hut that he passed at 17,100 feet and that enjoys the distinction of being the highest in the world was in other respects the same as the thousands of others in the same region. It sheltered a family of five. As we passed three rosy-cheeked children almost as fat as the sheep about them were sitting on the ground in a corner of the corral playing with balls of wool. Hundreds of alpacas and sheep grazed on the hill slopes and valley floor, and their tracks showed plainly that they were frequently driven up the snowline in those valleys where a trickle of water supported a band of pasture. Less than a hundred feet below them were other flocks and huts.

A STRANGE ANIMAL

Few people know what a satisfactory animal is the gnu. Quite a number of hoofed animals, like the ibex and the sacred ox, are mere tiresome combinations of Burbankism, but the gnu has qualities all his own. His head is homely as an unpainted barn—flat nose and very broad mouth and ears misshapen and uncouth. His body is that of an exceedingly powerful pony, with strong neck and rakish tail. His galvanic energy puts to shame the glorious abandon of a cat on a tin roof.

When I arrive before his inclosure he has usually retired to the shed in which he sleeps and stands in the doorway with faraway eyes. Efforts to entice him forth are futile. I turn at last as if to go, and as I move he bursts forth with the most heathenish cry that ever clattered from an animal throat. If it resembles anything, it is the trench klaxon that warns of an impending gas attack—a series of staccato shrieks which would shake the teeth from a bandsaw. I don't see how he can stand the noise he makes. Arm a rabbit with the voice of a gnu and lions will slink from his path.

Reaching the bars of his inclosure in three or four astounding leaps, the gnu halts, with head averted and feet wide apart, ignoring me utterly. When I move to right or left he remains motionless until fifteen feet are between us; then he closes the distance with a bound, shrieks terribly twice or thrice, and once more affects to be utterly oblivious of my presence. When finally I leave him the clatter of his fearful voice pursues me for hundreds of feet, drowning all other sounds.—Atlantic Monthly.

FRENCH FOLK TEND OUR BOYS' GRAVES

On the wooded slope of a hill that rises in a bend of the Seine just on the edge of Paris there is a little cemetery that is doing much to weld another link in the chain of friendship binding France and America.

Among the 700 graves of soldiers in this cemetery are many graves of American boys who have succumbed to their wounds in the hospitals in the suburbs of the city.

Almost every one of the American graves has been "adopted" by some French family, which takes care of the grave as though one of their own dead lay there. Many families have adopted from three to five of the little mounds, and one prominent French professional man of Paris has "adopted" fifteen and insists upon tending them with his own hands.

The duties of the "foster-parents" include besides the care of the grave an effort to get in touch with the relatives of the dead hero in America to tell them about the resting place of their fallen soldier.

Every one of the adopted graves is tended scrupulously. Fresh flowers are placed frequently and the American flag at the head of the grave is renewed when it is faded. On Sundays it is not unusual to see a dozen French women in deep mourning, sometimes accompanied by a troop of sober-faced children, reverently caring for the grave of an America who has fallen on the soil of France.

When a military funeral draws up to the gate of the cemetery and tenderly deposits another flag-draped coffin, the children gravely salute and follow the little procession to the new grave, and stand quietly while the chaplain reads the simple ceremony and the bugler sounds the final requiem.

VOODOO WORSHIPPERS RESUME SACRIFICES

With the recent sudden outbreak of cannibalistic practices by Voodoo worshippers in Cuba, which have resulted in the death of at least three innocent children and a half dozen of the Voodoos, the latter by lynch law for the first time in this country's history, fathers and mothers are living in constant fear that their little ones may be spirited away by the superstitious negroes to be offered up in sacrifice to Change, the god of the Brujos, as they are called in the Castillian language.

The Voodoos are divided into various sects, each with its separate god. The latter include Babagueye, god of sickness; Elecua, god of injury; Olorrun, god of misery, and Chango, the terrible god, to whom human sacrifices are made.

Chango, according to the Voodoo belief, was the son of Olorrun and Anaragua. He was slain by Elecua, the god of injury, and ascended into heaven from a Ceiba, or god tree, in the month of May. It is in the month of May, therefore, that the Brujos observe their holy week, when Chango is expected to make a week's visit to the earth, descending by the Ceiba, his sacred tree, always on Monday.

The followers of Elecua do not directly offer human sacrifice, although their healers sacrifice the lives of some patient by giving them poisonous concoctions, supposedly a mysterious cure for some ailment, in order to restore to health some other patient. Elecua, being the god of injury, his followers believe that good can come to one person only through injury to another.

Voodooism is not practised by the negroes alone. Many white persons also are said secretly to take part in their religious meetings, and accusations have been heard in various quarters of the difficulties encountered by officers seeking to break up their temples because of the obstacles placed in their way by persons of influence.

An active campaign by the authorities in Havana and other parts of the island have resulted in the capture of numerous Brujos and the seizure of many curious and weird objects used by them.

DEATH VALLEY

Death Valley is probably the most unique natural feature in California. It is located in the southeast corner of Incyo county, and is inclosed by the Panamint Mountains on the west and the Funeral Range on the east. It is seventy-five miles long, and at its narrowest point but eight miles wide.

At one time, most probably, it was the bed of an ancient river. The lowest depression is 299 feet below sea level, but above this rises Telescope Peak, 11,000 feet high, of the Panamint Range, and directly opposite the Funeral Peak, which reaches an altitude of 8,000 feet. During the winter these peaks are covered with snow.

This remarkable valley was discovered in 1850 by a party of immigrants, many of whom lost their lives in the attempt to cross it. The name has clung to it, also, as being the scene of numberless tragedies. Early in its history traditions of gold and silver deposits of wonderful richness within its boundaries persuaded many adventurous persons to undertake the hazardous experiment of its exploration. The number who have lost their lives in this desolate field is undoubtedly great. Pursuing the mirage of rich deposits of precious metals, these adventurous prospectors succumbed at last to the intolerable heat and the agonies of thirst.

The range of the thermometer is probably greater in Death Valley than elsewhere in the western hemisphere. In winter the temperature is way below zero, while in July and August the thermometer ranges for weeks at 137 degrees above, frequently rising several degrees higher. For weeks at a time the lowest temperature observed exceeded 100 degrees. The daily heat burns every vestige of vegetation. The Spanish bayonet, a plant that flourishes under the most arid conditions, here barely survives, while the mesquite, with its long roots penetrating deep into the earth in search of scanty moisture, just manages to exist.

It is in the months of greatest heat that the sand storms of Death Valley are most deadly. They rage with intense fury, obliterating the landscape and dimming the light of the sun, withering the scanty vegetation and covering the trails deep in powdered dust. At all times the aspect of the valley is superlatively desolate. No spot on earth surpasses it in aridity or tophet-like heat.

The belief that the borax marshes are the remains of the vast lake which once filled the valley is supported by traces of water-line found six feet above, on the mountainsides.

In general appearance, all borax marshes are alike. They are located at the point of greatest depression, and from a distance look like deposits of salt or snow. Under the surface is common wet clay or water of varying depths. These deposits are generally circular in form and appear as though once they were craters. Borax was created by contact of boracic acid in gaseous form, with the lime and soda of the surface. At Teels Marsh, Nevada, borate of lime appears in the form of balls embedded in clay along with soda, salt, etc., but at Columbus these are found in sandy soil. Sometimes these balls are decomposed, underlying the soil, which is removed and the borate shoveled out. Deposits of crude borate of soda are found in Nevada and in Death Valley at the Monte Blanco mines.

WONDERS OF GIBRALTAR.

Viewed from the deck of an ocean liner surging through the waves of the Mediterranean one can never forget the thrill he experiences at first sight of Gibraltar. Spanish girls of rare beauty come out in small boats to greet you, and when by the aid of a rope they hoist grapes up along the side of the ship it is seldom their baskets are lowered without a goodly amount of money in exchange for the fruit. Sounds of drums and bugles add to the exciting din, and amidst screeching whistles you descend to one of the tenders which wait below to take you ashore.

The little Spanish stuccoed houses are to be seen everywhere, and the women and girls with shawls of brilliant hues and mantillas upon their heads laugh and dance to the twang of a guitar.

Driving through the narrow, cobbled streets, visitors are constantly stopped by the natives, who attempt to sell them all sorts of trinkets, for jewelry shops appear at almost every corner. Eating places of every variety, with food at reaching distance from the curb, occupy the tiny sidewalks, and little children crawl in front of the phaeton like crabs with the hope of collecting a few pennies.

Finally the Alameda is reached, and this park, with its palm and cactus plants, is the pride of Gibraltar. Geraniums in abundance crown the entrance and tropical trees and bowers help to create a scene well to be remembered. Fountains play about on the east and west sides, while several small boulevards twine in and out through the park. Attractive pony carts carrying little rosy-faced English children accompanied by their Spanish servants, occupy the roseate driveways in the Alameda, and the liquid songs of the birds give a touch of softness and pathos to the spot.

And now we come to the scorpion rock of Gibraltar which cannot be appreciated from the water front, for the town stretches along the western side for over a mile, and only when directly in the interior of the colony can the gigantic size of the rock rightfully be estimated. It stands as if against the sky with a prepossessing dignity of indescribable mightiness and power. Tarik, the one-eyed Moore, landed at the foot of the rock of Calpe (now known as Gibraltar) in the year 711 to reconnoitre Gothic Spain, and therefore from Gibel Tarik (which means the hill of Tarik) the name of Gibraltar originated.

Low-wheeled, two-seated, so-called vans accompanied and drawn by ponies take the visitor to the base of the fortress, and a steep climb must then be made on foot. It is an extremely tedious trip, for the ascent is rocky and uneven.

Perhaps the most striking view, from a small opening in one of the caves built in the fortress is the white wall of Algeciras and San Roque, both paralled with the snow-capped mountains of Andalusia.

El Hacho, the signal tower, is not always open to visitors and many of the heavy guns are also kept under secrecy. In the tunnelled portions of the fort old batteries and cannon are pointed out by sentries, and secluded spots had been set aside for punishing purposes in bygone years. In one of the dark passageways the stone is cut in peculiar points which stand straight upward, representing icicles because of the shiny, silvery gloss on the ends of the highest needles of the rock, and one can readily imagine fireplaces to have been inserted in the walls.

Having attained the height of the fort and emerging suddenly into open sky, a wonderful vista stretches out 1,000 feet below. Ships anchored at bay seem but dwarfs, and the polo grounds, once famous for bull fighting, can also be observed. Far below the barrack yards look up at you and the smoky houses with their sloping roofs keep cover over the lounging soldiers.

As the sun takes refuge behind the fleecy lining of clouds, the mountains, hills and ocean form a panorama of wide scope and incomparable beauty.

THE FAMOUS ROTHSCHILD GARDEN.

With linden trees of immense size forming a shaded archway for a distance of three square blocks in circular fashion, in addition to peonies, daffodils and tulips clustering along the edge of a high latticed railing which surrounds the fairyland interior, one is apt to become so enraptured with this place of exquisite perfume and beauty that he completely forgets the world outside. Such is the impression gathered after a stroll around the exterior of the "Rothschild gardens" lying in an exclusive spot just outside Vienna.

The first source of admiration is the home of the owner of these rare gardens, of whom it most certainly may be said he "dwells within enchanted walls." The house is so literally covered with vines and flowers creeping from ground to roof that it is difficult to discover, at first, its material. It is a harmonious mingling of brick and wood and stone. The lower section comprises a first floor located high off the ground, with two stories above, leaving the attic divided into rooms and the various little towers.

The entrance is very artistically planned, being of white stone against the red and brown background of the house. About a dozen steps in circular rotation lead upward to the doorway, which has an arch of white marble overhead supported by straight lined columns, around which vines have wound their way. There is quite a long gravel walk to this abode, with huge artificial plants on either side, and the surrounding lawns are beds of exquisitely laid-out flowers of every description.

A little Japanese village is built in midget form in an enclosed low wall. Actual paths are formed in the small grass plots, which are surrounded by trees, gardens and flower beds. Figures of little Japanese maidens are seen going to and from their temple of worship. As their flowered costumes seem real, so do the Oriental colorings of the temple blend in unison, and upon close scrutiny Japanese men may be seen in prayer, bowing before the image they believe in. The familiar two-wheeled chair, drawn by a servant of her own country and so characteristic of the girl of Japan as her sole means of conveyance, is also plainly evident.

Another striking feature of these Viennese gardens is the vegetable section. One might not credit the fact that such insignificant things as eatables could be worthy of note or mention, but by arrangement of colors they are beautiful. The pink carrot has a cluster of green peas as a background, while ears of corn surround leaves of lettuce with the bright red radish as a center. Some are so arranged as to resemble a bouquet of flowers, and here is where cauliflower, spinach, watercress and beets play their separate parts. The ground fruits are planted with the same idea.

Climax of all this beauty is the central flower garden. (The Rothschild gardens are open to visitors between April and September inclusive.) It seems as if nowhere could so much combined beauty be imagined. Every possible flower is on view and at its own advantage.

Before leaving the gardens three marble statues standing on a small terrace overlooking the southwest expanse of the city call for notice. White marble slabs form benches upon which to rest, and are richly engraved with images and flowers. The benches number about ten, placed rather far apart, with large rose bushes back of each one.

WONDERS OF A FAMOUS FOUNTAIN

After night has set in upon the Schwarzenbergplatz in picturesque Vienna, hundreds of enthusiastic tourists were wont to throng about the place to hear a well trained outdoor band peal forth strains of classic music and to gaze upon the wonders of its glorious fountain.

Before the palace of Prince Schwarzenberg is the celebrated "lumineuse" fountain, lighted by twenty-seven hidden reflectors, containing a total power of 270 million candles. The bowl is tremendous in size and sprays of water ascend in every color and shade imaginable, built within each other in circular form. The outer part, for example, will be crimson red, while the extreme inner center sends forth a brilliant ray of gold, and each few seconds the former changes to a fainter tint, going gradually from the original hue to garnet, ruby and lastly light red. Meanwhile, with the gold section running into bronze and yellow, a sudden outburst of dark green emerges from another spot, blending its spray to an apple, olive and finally nile shade, with the beautiful contrast of a deep blue at its side, this also changing from navy to its more delicate colors.

Little springlets of quickly revertible brown, pink and orange play together, and link over each other, dropping back into the large pool in an entirely different tone, namely, violet. Immediately on top of this, heliotrope and pale lavender bounce up, and so they go on, always illuminating the tiny drops differently upon their descent.

With all these marvellous interplays of every existing hue, perhaps the greatest splendor of the scene lies in the fact that each radiance of dew takes turns at shooting up the highest, and often one must cast his glance to a considerable height when gazing upon the tallest little bubble.

RADIO INVENTION FOR DEAF OPERATOR

It is no longer impossible for a person stone deaf to become an expert wireless operator. C. A. Hoxie has invented a radio receiving set whereby the message is photographically registered on a tape, making an accurate and permanent record and receiving by ear unnecessary.

This system has been so far perfected that it is in daily operation at the Otter Cliffs receiving station, near Bar Harbor, Maine, says the Electrical Experimenter for July. Naval officers, using the photographic system, have received repeatedly regular traffic schedules ranging from 1,000 words to 7,000 words without interruption and at a speed of from forty to fifty-five words a minute.

As far as speed is concerned, the machine has recorded at the rate of 400 words a minute, which is the speed of a machine gun, and Mr. Hoxie himself recorded a low-power message at a speed of 600 words a minute. Up to this time the fastest means of catching radio messages was by a phonographic arrangement, but that never attained the velocity of 600 words a minute.

Mr. Hoxie's apparatus makes possible a big financial saving for the radio companies. For years it has been found that the best time for transmitting messages between here and Europe was from 4 a. m. to 10 a. m. because atmospheric conditions are best then.

The apparatus consists of a light-weight mirror "fluttering" in electro-magnetic turn with the minute electric impulses from the antenna. The duration and extent of the oscillations vary according to dot, dash or silence of the sender. The mirror reflects a beam of light on a moving sensitive tape. The tape then passes through tubes containing a photograph developer, is washed, dried, and deposited in a basket like the tape on a broker's ticker. The time to record, develop and dry the tape is from two to four minutes.

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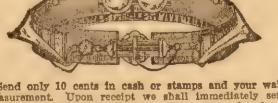

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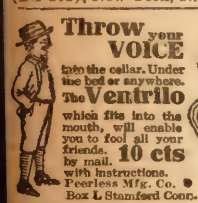

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